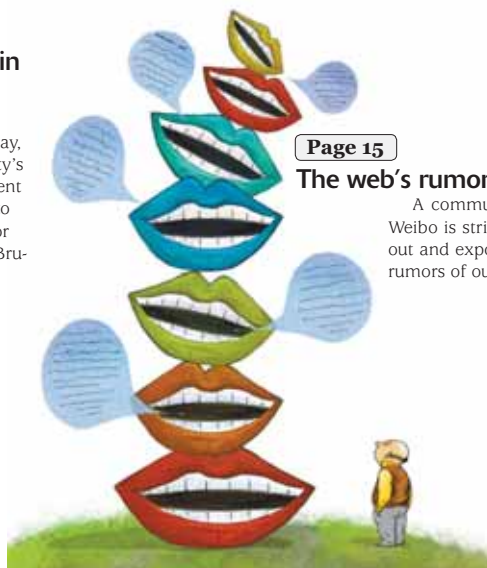




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City pitches in for soap art

Many young people walked away, but the community's elderly warmly went into their homes to fetch used soap for Belgian artist De Bruyn's project.



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The web's rumor crushers

A community on Sina Weibo is striving to ferret out and expose the worst rumors of our daily lives.

Wisdom of the poor



When life is prosperous, people became wasteful, indifferent to their neighbors and careless about pollution. The simple wisdom of the poor is lost.

Song Dong's exhibition recalls a childhood spent in the hutong: one crowded, but harmonious.

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New industry helps the rich to wed

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City's pools no place for swimmers

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Interior the future of growth

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Rodeo still on at the Nest despite 'cruelty' boycott

By Han Manman

Organizers of Rodeo China said they will not cancel or reschedule their plans to hold a rodeo show at the Bird's Nest this October despite a local boycott that began with claims of animal cruelty.

"We have nothing to hide," said Richard Tucker, president of Rodeo China. The US rodeo promoter said there will be no animal abuse at its "important component of the China-US cultural exchange program in 2011."

Rodeo China, an eight-day event featuring the best in rodeo talent, is part of a private sector exchange agreement made at the second annual US-China Consultation.

The show, the largest to be staged in the Bird's Nest stadium since the 2008 Olympics, will bring in 120 cowboys, 180 horses, 36 bulls and 90 steers from abroad.

China's animal welfare associations have opposed the upcoming show, stating that it promotes animal cruelty and appealing to the local government to ban it.

Sixty-eight animal welfare associations have signed a joint letter appealing for the cancellation. The letter says that rodeo is a cruel sport, and that animals are tortured for entertainment.

"The sport has long been criticized for promoting animal cruelty and is rejected by the overwhelming majority of Americans. Now they want to bring it to Beijing," the open letter said.

"Why do the bulls and calves jump so high during the performance? Because they are forced to wear tight belts on their groins, and they leap in pain when the cowboys pull on them to impress the audience," said Zhang Dan, founder of China Animal Protection Media Saloon.

"Cowboy rodeo is not a sport. It is cruel and humiliating show in which the animals are forced participants. We cannot allow these cowboys to move their 'sport' to China," Zhang said.

But Tucker said his team has done nothing wrong.

"Every animal involved in our performance is treated as partner and athlete, even as a sports star. People remember their names, and some of them even have fans," he said.



Dozens of China animal welfare associations are boycotting the rodeo show because of supposed animal cruelty.

Photo provided by Richard Tucker

Tucker said that livestock used by Rodeo China are being treated humanely and with proper consideration of their health and welfare.

According to a survey conducted in 1999 and 2000 in the US, as few as 38 out of 17,743 rodeo animals surveyed were injured during the course of performance.

"Although it is often looked upon as a 'rough sport,' it is actually very

well regulated, and livestock safety is a paramount concern. It stands in stark contrast to horse racing, which is often looked upon as refined, where an estimated one in three horses are injured," he said.

Tucker said Rodeo China has invited animal welfare groups to address their concerns over the eight-day event. "They unfortunately chose this way to draw

attention to themselves. It's a pity," he said.

"We intend to be completely transparent, because we really have nothing to hide," he said.

The rodeo is being hosted by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, the National Stadium and Less Is Forever More Inc. It will be the first rodeo in China.

Universities move from downtown to suburbs

By Li Zhixin

Nine local universities are being moved to the suburbs as part of a plan to expand downtown Beijing.

China Foreign Affairs University, The Central Academy of Drama, Beijing Information Science and Technology University and Beijing City University are being moved to Changping District.

Capital University of Economics and Business, Beijing Institute of Technology and Beijing Technology and Business University are being moved to Fangshan District.

Minzu University of China is being moved to Fengtai District, and Beijing Construction College to Daxing District.

Beijing City University is also being moved to the suburbs during the next five years, according to an announcement by the Beijing Municipal Education Commission.

"The new locations will expand their campus space four to five times over," said Zhao Qing, deputy director of the commission's department of Scientific Research and Graduate Education. "The old sites will be reserved for graduate and international students."

He said the government will support the schools during the move to reclaim control of more downtown space.

The commission will also strengthen its integration of teaching resources among all universities with a similar focus.

The commission said there are 48 schools teaching English, 41 teaching law and 40 teaching computer science among the city's 64 universities.

"Although the emphasis of each school varies, their offerings among professional disciplines are clearly similar," he said.

As part of the newest five-year plan, the city intends to open more schools' teaching and scientific resources, such as laboratories, libraries, off-campus practice bases and classrooms, to more people to improve resource utilization and avoid redundant construction.

Beijing's cost of living exceeds New York's

By Han Manman

Beijing is the most expensive city on the Chinese mainland for expats working in here, ranking 20th in the world for cost of living and by far surpassing New York, a recent global survey found.

Conducted by US-based global consulting firm Mercer Investment Consulting (MIC), the survey investigated 214 cities on five continents and measured the cost of more than 200 items at each location,

including housing, transportation, food, daily necessities and entertainment.

New York prices were used as a baseline for rankings.

According to the survey, Beijing is even more expensive than New York and Paris. The cost of living in New York was only 86 percent of the cost in Beijing.

While housing remains the biggest expense for expats from transnational corporations, the price of schooling,

healthcare and imported goods in Beijing remains higher than other cities in the country, the report said.

"I think everything in Beijing is getting more expensive now – especially housing and daily necessities. The restaurants near my home on Sanlitun are also getting more and more expensive," said John Gass, a project manager at a local IT company.

He said the only thing that has not become more expensive during the last five years is the

cost of transportation.

Gass said that although the cost of living remains within his budget, he may feel pressure if the price continues to increase.

Lisa Deng, Mercer's China market manager, said the survey has been conducted annually since 1990 to help multinational companies and governments adjust the wages of their overseas staff.

She said that compared to cities in other countries like Australia, the cost of living in most

Chinese cities has been stable.

Four additional Chinese cities made the list of the world's 50 most expensive cities: Hong Kong, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, which ranked 9th, 21st, 38th and 43th.

According to the survey results, the world's most expensive cities in 2011 are Luanda in Angola, Tokyo in Japan and N'Djamena in Chad.

Pakistan's port city of Karachi is the cheapest.

Yao Ming: Basketball is not my life

For Yao Ming, leaving behind basketball is hardly cause for regret. The star athlete is quite looking forward to his new life after the sport.

The Houston Rockets' center announced his retirement from the National Basketball Association (NBA) on Wednesday at his hometown Shanghai, raising a wave of speculation about his future.

"Basketball is only a part of my life. I won't change my mind. Basketball is not my life," Yao told Xinhua after the press conference on his retirement.

"I'm prepared for the day, as I said before. My parents told me 17 years ago that one day you will retire. No matter how good you are, no matter how long it takes, you'll get injured and walk away from basketball. They were right," he said.

His announcement on Wednesday was expected since media learned of his plans less than a week and a half ago.

"I won't be disabled, doctors have assured me. But the injury to my left foot is an obstacle that I cannot overcome if I choose to continue my basketball career," Yao said.

"My parents and my family wanted me to retire. They cared about my health. It was a hard decision at first – to stop my professional athletic career. But finally I made the choice."

Yao appeared before the media with his parents, his wife and his 14-month-old daughter for the first time, a sign that his life is changing to focus on family rather than sport.

"I'll play with my daughter before she grows up. I don't know whether I can keep up with her if she runs faster than me in the



Yao appearing before the media with his wife and daughter for the first time, a sign that his life is changing to focus on family rather than sport.

CFP Photo

future," Yao said.

He said he didn't want his daughter to be a basketball player.

During the news conference, he was asked by Daryl Morey, the General Manager of the Rockets, about finding another Yao. "You'd better deal with the lock-out first; then we can talk about players," Yao said.

He offered some advice to whoever does step up to become his successor.

"Concentrate on warm-ups and

build up your body. You'll be better prepared to deal with injuries," Yao said. "Players like me, Wang Zhizhi and Menk Bateer – we are the first generation to play abroad. We were not well prepared."

Life after retirement will not be idle. In some way, Yao will be busier than when he was on the court.

"I'm still learning. No matter what I'm going to do after retirement, I need to study. I won't tell you which classes I'm going to take, but I will start soon so I can

be a successful retired athlete." Yao was a successful philanthropist even before retirement. He founded the Yao Foundation three years ago, and can recite the names of every school his foundation assisted and knows where every last bit of money was spent.

"People say I could be a member of the Hall of Fame. Hall-of-Famers have to be great athletes, both on and off the court. It's a big honor," Yao said.

(Xinhua)

Gov prepares to revamp nation's elevator safety

By Han Manman

The central government is adopting new standards for elevators to replace current standards, which are based on standards from European Union circa 1995.

It recently criticized the current standards as lax and far out of step with international norms.

The new standards will be based on EU guidelines passed in 2008, said Chen Fengwang, secretary-general of a technical committee at the Elevators Standardization Administration of China.

Chen said drafting the new standards took the committee a year and a half. It is currently awaiting approval.

Elevator safety came under the spotlight after a number of recent elevator and escalator accidents.

On July 5, an upward-bound escalator at the Beijing Zoo station on Line 4 changed direction

without notice, causing about 30 people to fall and killing one.

Several escalator accidents also happened in Shenzhen, Shanghai and Nanjing this month, injuring numerous passengers.

Government records show that 300,000 new elevators entered service during the last several years, accounting for more than half of the world's total. There have been 40 major elevator accidents since 2005, killing an average of 30 people per year.

Chen said China's elevator safety is close to standards set by developed countries, but that the rapid construction of new elevators has strained safety management.

Traffic flow, local terrain and the environment are important considerations in setting safety standards for elevators and escalators, said Rao Meiwan, an escalator engineer at the Guangzhou Metro Design and



Frequent escalator accidents this month have elevator safety under the spotlight.

CFP Photo

Research Institute.

Rao wrote in a 2008 report that the mainland's national elevator standard did not include a definition for heavy-traffic escalators, leaving subway builders to use whatever standards they wanted.

A half-hour heavy load benchmark is the national standard for ordinary escalators in public areas – not for high-traffic escalators, Rao wrote.

Rao said she believed the new standards would help considerably to improve safety standards.

Single women's needs fuel economic boom

By Zhang Dongya

China has been talking much about a new "single women boom" amid reports of more women choosing not to marry.

The news originated from a thesis titled "Survey of Urban Single Women's Survival State," which was published at a seminar on national family problems in Guangdong Province on July 9.

The author, Chen Yaya, a researcher at Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, said in the thesis that many single women are choosing to remain so, and that it is affecting the economy in big cities.

According to the survey, more than 30 percent of all single women have taken out a mortgage for their own home.

China has experienced "singles booms" several times in the past century.

The marriage law, first passed in the 1950s, inspired many people to exercise their right not to wed. At the end of the 1970s, many "educated youth" who returned to the city split from their spouses in the countryside. In 1990s, the third tide came with to changing ideas about the Chinese family.

The present "boom" is being attributed to an embracement of feminist ideals.

In support of her thesis, Chen cited a 1996 survey conducted by Horizon Research Consultancy Group. The survey said that 50 percent of the people who wished they were single in the cities were women. In 2005, more than 60 percent of the single Beijingers between the ages of 30 and 50 were women.

Single women may be putting more energy into work. A survey by the lad's magazine For Him Magazine (FHM) found that single women in Shanghai were busy with work – more than 57 percent of them worked more than eight hours every day.

More than one third of single women were also considering purchasing homes.

Marida Liu, who works for a foreign enterprise in Beijing, recently bought an apartment on the border between Beijing and Hebei Province.

"It feels comfortable and secure to live in your own house, especially in Beijing," she said.

Those who choose to be single usually have a higher consumption ability.

But the Guangzhou-based *Yangcheng Evening News* said, quoting sociology and demography expert Zheng Zizhen, "The so-called fourth 'single boom' lacks authoritative data and it is a 'pseudo-proposition.'"

Zheng said it is a thoughtless to call it a trend, as 'singles' numbers are only concentrated in Beijing and Shanghai.

Super-rich call on matchmakers to find love

By Yao Weijie

Royal gardens, fine wine and string quartets, once the domain of Hollywood re-enactments of royal balls, are the typical features of China's super-elite matchmaking parties.

It appears that rich men too worry about being unfaithful, and a new industry has sprung up to help them find a mate. But these lavish affairs may be less about the search for true love than they are showy displays of wealth.



The Swissotel Beijing hosting a lavish party for rich singles to find a bride.

Twenty-one millionaires recently attended a recent matchmaking event at a Beijing luxury hotel in hopes of pairing off with 22 single women.

While the last 30 years of economic growth have created many such super-rich, few have been willing to put aside profits and search for wedded bliss.

Their single status has given rise to a new super-elite matchmaking industry, and its potential for growth is huge, said Liu Huihua, chief consultant at TheOne.

TheOne is an elite matchmaking agency that organizes dating parties at upscale locations like luxury hotels and scenic locations like West Lake in Hangzhou and the old streets of Suzhou.

Men seeking to attend these meet-ups are required to have more than 10 million yuan in fixed assets. Tickets alone cost 50,000 yuan.

The admission may seem pricey, but Golden Bachelor, a new website offering similar services, has even more strict qualifications.

"Our clients must have personal or family wealth greater than or equal to 5 million yuan, and they must be from a wealthy or aristocratic background," said Fei Yang, the website's chief consultant.

Golden Bachelor charges a sliding fee depending on its members' demands. Most client requests run up a 300,000-yuan bill.

However, if a member is picky and only wants to meet a 20-year-old, English-speaking teacher from Jiangsu Province who has a fair complexion, long hair and is 168 centimeters tall, the combination of demands could cost 1 million yuan.

Golden Bachelor's "love hunters" seek out suitable matches among women nationwide and grant potential matches free access to the matchmaking party. Women who pair off at the event are given a 10,000-yuan bonus.

The lover hunters are a team of women chosen from among 50,000 applicants. Those who help the company scout a successful match can win a permanent position with a 250,000-yuan salary and a Mini Cooper car.

"Given the setup, I have to say that women are being treated like commodities. Consumers who have money can acquire



A consultant at Golden Bachelor scouting women for the super-rich.

"Given the setup, I have to say that women are being treated like commodities. Consumers who have money can acquire them, and those without the means can only look on from a distance."

them, and those without the means can only look on from a distance," said Yang Zheng, a registered member of Shijijiyuan.

In 2011, the Chinese mainland had 960,000 men worth more than 10 million yuan and 60,000 billionaires; the numbers are increasing 10 percent each year, according to the Hurun Rich List.

But billionaires are a fickle group, and are always looking for new forms of blind dating.

Fei said that next month his company is opening a "wife school," a one-year program where marriage experts will train female students. The students will be admitted based on their appearance, personality and knowledge, and tuition will cost 100,000 yuan.

"We don't teach them cooking and tea art. We expect that their husbands will hire servants if they want to see such performances. Our focus is teaching them how to manage a family," she said.

Graduates will be referred to Golden Bachelor members, Fei said.

But Liu Huipu, vice president of Shijijiyuan, says Golden Bachelor may have a hard time making these women's tuition worth it.

"Any matchmaking company knows it's impossible to say whether its members will actually marry. We only promise to help them find a suitable, satisfactory match," he said.

Liu said China's elite matchmaking industry is stratified by the services offered: some companies specialize in elite matchmaking; others in finding true love online; others in finding suitable matches; and at the bottom are normal matchmaking services that offer a premium option for elites.

Shijijiyuan's annual revenue for matchmaking services grew 159 percent from 2009 to 2010, when it accounted for 15.7 percent of its total business volume, according to data from Chinese Internet Data Research Information Center (199it.com).

But its elite matchmaking service focuses on single meet-ups rather than parties. Almost all of the matchmaking companies at the top end are searching for ways to extend these services and attract more billionaires.

"We (already) refuse people whose requirements are too high, regardless of their own conditions," Liu said.

New clients have a meeting with a

professional psychological about their expectations, and the psychologist helps suggest suitable matches from the company's database.

Possible matches go through a two-hour interview to verify their background before being allowed to meet with a client. "About 80 percent of the people in our database have submitted fraudulent information. That's why it takes us four days of screenings to come up with a real match," Liu said.

These personal meet-ups seem to be favored by more and more of China's billionaires, as they are low-key and allow them to find wives without attracting attention, said Zhang Yiwen, chief counselor of Good Couple, a website offering similar services.

The process allows matchmaking companies to help members work past their psychological hurdles and begin a successful relationship.

But no matter how wonderfully these elite matchmaking services are presented, their inner workings are chaotic.

"Some clients are coming only to find girlfriend or boyfriends and aren't looking for a serious relationship. A lot of irresponsible matchmakers still choose to accept their business," Zhang said.

During the screening process, one man refused to produce any documents to back up his information because he said he had a wife who he didn't love and was looking for a "soul mate" on the side.

"It was hardly an unusual request. We get similar phone calls every day. While our company refuses to take their business, it's hard to say what others will do," Zhang said.

And that could damage the reputation of the industry.

Wang Junjun, 26-year-old employee of Guanlan Golf in Shenzhen, said she attended a matchmaking party in the boom town.

"I met a rich man at the party and gave him my number, but then he was constantly fawning over another girl and trying to get her information," she said.

"After the party, he called me several times and kept saying how much he liked me. It felt bad. I wanted a real relationship, not just to fool around," she said.

Boiling dumplings?

Lack of swimming pools hinders sport



A shortage of public pools has made swimming for exercise impossible.

IC Photo/Stephen Shaver

As the summer heat continues to rise, more people are choosing to pile into public pools, according to an AFP report.

"The crowded swimming pools offer so little room that most people can only stand in one spot," it said.

In China, swimming has long been a means of fitness, and

Chairman Mao Zedong famously crossed the Yangtze River 17 times in the 1950s.

But in recent years, a lack of swimming facilities has stopped people from pursuing swimming as a year-round hobby, let alone as a competitive sport.

"Now, a swimming pool is just a place to escape the summer

heat," Zhang Yeduan, a local official in Shanghai, told AFP.

The government, however, sees swimming as a way to improve children's fitness and requires regular schools to have swim teams and courses. That would also groom children from a young age to compete internationally.

(Agencies)

Being boiled like dumplings is the popular slang for Chinese being in crowded swimming pools.

But that frenzy isn't because of a love of exercise. For most Chinese, pools are only a place to cool off in the summer heat.

The third eye

Swimming hardly for exercise

By Huang Daohen

When referring to swimming in Beijing, Matthew Wong has much to complain about.

The 31-year-old business consultant came to the capital from Washington three months ago and has been looking for a nice and pool that isn't too crowded.

"There aren't many 'public' swimming pools where I live," he said.

Wong recently visited a swimming pool near his apartment in Chaoyang District and found it a disaster: both noisy and crowded.

The 50-meter lap lanes were packed with crowds of people who stood around to chat.

"I'm shocked that anyone can endure this," Wong said. He has since become a member at a gym with a small pool.

Wong is not the only one who has found swimming difficult. Erin Chow, who moved to Beijing from Hong Kong two years ago, tried dozens of pools near her apartment on Chaoyangmen Outer Avenue.

"The city is just too crowded — you can only get into a proper

place if you are willing to pay a premium," she said.

Currently, there are five kinds of pools in Beijing: public swimming pools, which are cheap and crowded, those attached to high-end residential areas, those attached to schools, those in gyms and those in hotels.

Chow said pools attached to gyms are usually the best.

Of course, gym culture is still in its infancy. Many locals, especially the elderly, take a dainty approach to exercise.

At a park near Chow's apartment in Sanlitun, many spry senior residents practice tai chi or walk backwards while slapping their arms.

Ballroom dancing is especially popular among women. As the summer evening falls, the tinny blare of folk music can always be heard over crackling loudspeakers in courtyards and parks.

Badminton, ping pong and basketball are also common street sports.

When Chinese people choose to exercise, it's more about socializing than burning calories, Chow said.

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Go west

Interior a magnet for foreign firms



By Huang Daohen

The future is in the 2nd- and 3rd-tier cities – especially those located deep inland, analysts say.

Faced with soaring labor costs and a shortage of skilled workers, an increasing number of companies from home and abroad are moving their factories west from the coast.

Vice-Premier Wang Qishan attends a forum to promote the development of China's western interior.

Gu Dao/CFP Photo

Journey west

"I chose to start my business here because the area has a low cost of living and low operating costs," Felix Stroka said.

The 29-year-old entrepreneur from Chicago graduated from a school in Shanghai two years ago. When it was time to set up a consultancy, he decided on Xi'an instead of a populous coastal city.

The competition in inland cities is less fierce than in the southeast, where many established companies have a secure foothold, he said.

And more importantly, there are quality employees willing to work for significantly less pay.

When Stroka posted his recruitment notice on Zhaopin.com, an online job hunting website, he required that all applicants be residents of Xi'an.

"Xi'an's college education is among the best in the country," he said.

Stroka isn't the only one drawn to the interior. Research by the consulting company Accenture shows that a growing number of companies, especially multinational firms from the US, are moving to the west and central areas to offset rising labor costs.

"One of the biggest trends we have seen in the last year is this industrial relocation," said Steven Lee, chief analyst at Accenture China and head of the research.

Lee said labor costs are driving the shift. According to the research, last year, average salaries in all major industries rose 8.4 percent.

This year, the expected increase is 9 percent.

"Rising labor cost is a fact of life because the government supports it," Lee said. Recent years have seen more government policies favor workers and their rights, and Lee believes that is a means for the government to redistribute and balance social income.

Local governments across the nation responded by raising minimum wages. Statistics from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security showed that last year, a

total of 30 provinces raised the local minimum wage an average of 22.8 percent.

Double-edged sword

But while a wage hike may improve workers' living standards, it could cripple small- and medium-sized enterprises.

More than three-quarters of entrepreneurs polled in Lee's research said the rising costs of labor and raw materials are making it difficult to do business.

The recent closure of two large toymakers in Dongguan, Guangdong Province became the latest evidence.

Last week, Dongguan-based toymaker Suyi Toy filed for bankruptcy, putting more than 1,000 jobs at risk.

Suyi, a well-known toymaker in the area, could be a clear signal that similar toymakers are in trouble, Lee said. "This would spark a domino effect and similar firms might go under."

Currently, the annual salary for a skilled worker in inland cities like Xi'an or Chengdu is about 20,000 yuan. In coastal cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou, it is more than 30,000 yuan.

Young economic delta

But in addition to the lower labor costs in the west, companies have also found huge potential for growth, Lee said.

"No one would deny that the future growth lies in second- and third-tier cities, which are inland," he said. Aside from known cities like Wuhan, Chengdu and Chongqing, there are many cities that are unfamiliar to investors.

"The future economic growth is there," Lee said.

Though there is no official name for the inland economic zone, which includes the Chongqing Municipality and Sichuan and Shaanxi provinces, many are calling it the "West Delta."

Lee said the area is a magnet for overseas investment due to its policy incentives, lower labor costs and low competition.

The "go west" campaign, initiated in 2000 by the central government in a bid

to encourage economic growth in the less developed regions, includes six provinces and five autonomous regions.

Leave or stay

Amid the fear of China's rising labor cost, some multinational companies that used to outsource are looking to other low-cost Asian countries such as Vietnam and Malaysia.

But the Accenture report finds that due to emerging challenges like poor infrastructure, these companies are looking back to China's interior.

"It makes economic sense," Lee said. The Chinese government has invested a lot in recent years to improve infrastructure in ports, roads and facilities, and with ample skilled workers China is still the world's factory.

The US computer maker Hewlett-Packard and networking giant Cisco have set up research and development centers and manufacturing bases in Chongqing.

Dell announced that it would open its second China operations center with manufacturing, sales and services in Chengdu this year, in a bid to supply the booming demand in the country's western area.

Ed Chan, who headed Wal-Mart China, told a recent press conference that the company has plans for expansion in Chongqing.

But not all foreign companies find it convenient to invest in the delta. Lee said a question remains: are the advantages of low labor cost and competition worth the risk of doing business in uncharted economic territory?

Despite the tax breaks and improved infrastructure as a bonus for going west, Lee said this reliance may be a bit premature for some industries.

One American textile company introduced itself to the Shaanxi Provincial government but ended up driven away by a lack of policy support.

At this point, a careful assessment of potential risks and risk management strategies must be exercised before taking such a step, Lee said.

Standard Chartered to track yuan policy

By Zhao Hongyi

Standard Chartered Bank has started keeping track of China's monetary policies and market conditions with a new Monetary Conditions Index (MCI) opened this week in Beijing.

The index is believed to be the first of its kind on market, and tracks real interest rates and changes in the real exchange.

To reflect the correlation between loan growth and economic activity, it uses loan growth and a dummy variable to measure whether a "hard" loan quota is being applied to the banking system.

"Our purpose is to offer clients a reference so they can study the development trends and direction of China's economy," Stephen Green, a senior economist from Standard Chartered, said at the press briefing earlier this week.

It could also be a tool to evaluate the existence of currency speculation. China's economy takes in vast quantities of foreign capital, which many guess could be driving up prices.

China's economy is at a crossroads: after three decades of strong growth, it is being pressured to appreciate its currency by the US and European Union.

Its currency appreciated by a quarter from 8.5 yuan to the US dollar to 6.25 over the past decade due to trade surplus.

But in the past three years, due in part to strong speculation in the property market, inflation of yuan has been occurring inside the country.

The consumer price index (CPI), a key marker of domestic inflation, has been rising 10 percent per month, according to current official statistics.

In 2001, China's broad money supply (M2) was 13.5 trillion yuan. That figure climbed to 76 trillion in 2011. A significant part of that increase was the result of pressure to export.

Export companies and foreign investors have had to exchange their foreign currencies at a favorable price with the government, which explains why the central government has a foreign reserve of more than \$3 trillion.

As a result, the cost of daily-use commodities like food, clothing, transportation and rent has almost doubled this year.

To counter inflation, the People's Bank of China adopted a tightened monetary policy, raising commercial banks' required deposits from 12.5 percent to 21.5 percent this year.

Commercial banks must return 300 billion yuan to the central bank for storage for each percentage point increase.

The deposit hike forced commercial banks to raise their credit rates more than 7 percent, putting small enterprises in a difficult position.

While the tightened monetary has somewhat stabilized the price of commodities, many say the policy should be ended before it kills off the nation's millions of essential small- and medium-sized businesses.

Others say China has a cash surplus, and the market won't stabilize until the central bank reclaims the notes.

As a commercial bank in Hong Kong, Standard Chartered has long been active in China providing services like asset management and currency exchange.

Standard Chartered's Global Research team has been assigned to update the new index on a quarterly basis.

A way out for retired athletes

By Zhang Dongya

Zhang Shangwu, a former gymnast and world champion, was found begging at the Wangfujing subway station last week. He was shortly after driven away by police.

Zhang is not the first gymnast to fall after retirement.

Former national weightlifting champion Zou Chunlan was reportedly working in a public bathhouse and offering rubdowns to its customers. Another marathon champion Ai Dongmei sold her medals to pay the rent.

Their personal crises have raised questions about how the country should provide for its retired athletes.

But Zhang's case has also highlighted the need for athletes to focus on their education.

The 27-year-old Zhang went to a sports school when he was five years old and was selected to join the national gymnastics team when he was 12. He won two gold medals at the World University Championships in 2001 when he was 18, including a team champion with the 2008 Olympic champion Yang Wei.

He said people on the street did not believe he was a former world champion until he did a gymnastics move.

tics move.

Zhang injured his left Achilles tendon in training in 2002 and had not fully recovered when he was forced to retire in 2005.

The 151-centimeter gymnast said he was too short to find a good job. He worked in a rest home in Hebei Province and at a restaurant as a deliveryman. He wanted to get a security guard job, but was too short to be considered. He sold his gold medal from the World University Games for 150 yuan when he was left penniless.

In 2007, he was arrested for petty theft and sentenced to three years imprisonment. He turned to begging this April in Hebei, Tianjin and Beijing after being released from prison. He said he earned 20 yuan per day as a beggar in Hebei, but could make between 30 and 40 yuan in Beijing.

Since news of his plight broke, many organizations have offered Zhang a job. Among his prospective employers is the Champion Found, co-founded by the Chinese Red Cross Foundation, and the recycling billionaire Chen Guangbiao.

Zhang said he would not consider any of the jobs, and that he is planning to set up a fitness club in Beijing.



Zhang Shangwu's begging has again drawn attention to the plight of retired athletes.

CFP Photo

Comment

Help him improve his attitude

Zhang Shangwu has complained about everything including the coach and society – but never about himself. Problems with the athletic retirement system are not the reason athletes fail to get an education. Zhang himself has admitted that he committed a crime because he failed to take control of his destiny and gave up hope.

How to help him is a big

question. We can't just hand him a job or money, because it doesn't solve the problem. And in his present state, no one can guarantee he won't end up right back in this position next time he encounters an obstacle. He needs to learn how to support himself and steer his own fate – especially when things appear so desperate.

– Qian Shao, critic at Wuhan Morning Post

Loopholes in sports, schools and social security

The sports system puts its emphasis on athletics at the expense of morality and obeying the law. He was driven away from the national team for disciplinary infractions and violating the regulations. It was simple and crude to throw him out like that.

Zhang is typical among retired athletes. He had strict

physical training from a young age and no real schooling. Most professional athletes fail to complete middle school and never learn any techniques or skills to help them survive after their athletic career ends. With no skills or access to basic social security, of course they would take a risk and turn to crime.

– Liu Yong, commentator of New Express Daily

Personality the root of tragedy

Zhang Shangwu was contemptuous from a young age due to his poor upbringing. He complained endlessly about society and "the system" instead of getting off his ass and working to make a living. His glory days are behind him. It's time to struggle and build a new life.

– Tani Xie, weibo user

Chinese 'Davinci' in trouble

By Li Zhixin

Domestic furniture manufacturer and agent Davinci, famous for its expensive prices, has been dogged by accusations of swindling its customers with poor quality products since a CCTV report aired.

The ten-minute program, Weekly Report on Product Quality, exposed on July 10 that Davinci's furniture is not imported from Italy as it claimed, but was produced domestically from polymer materials like plywood and high density fiberboard rather than rare woods.

The segment dealt a devastating blow to Davinci's reputation.

At a related news briefing Panzhuang Xiuhua, central executive officer of the company, said Davinci has always imported its products for sale on the domestic market, and that the Italian factories used materials sourced all over the world.

She began crying during the news briefing when someone questioned her explanation.

Davinci's shop in Hangzhou was asked to close down pending reforms, and its shops in Beijing,

Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Chongqing are being investigated by local industry and commerce authorities.

Guangzhou Daily reported that many domestic furniture makers register their trademarks abroad and sell their products domestically as faux imports at an extreme markup.

The daily quoted by an insider as saying that the companies but cheap, domestic raw material to get rich quick. Many register a company in a foreign country, then export the domestic materials to that country, then send the products back to China in the guise of that company to transform them into "imports."

The price of the furniture varies greatly. Profit can be fourfold in Beijing, and double or triple in coastal cities.

Beijing Business Today questioned the supervision of the quality control administration, as it found Davinci's counterfeit behavior was exposed six years ago, but the company was still allowed to operate as normal and almost became listed on the stock exchange.

Comment

Davinci is not alone

Other furniture companies are doing the same thing. It is even common in other industries that produce fruits, clothing, dairy products and cosmetics.

Geographical attributes are not a reliable endorsement of a product. With trade opening up and transportation getting cheaper, people's confidence in a product should depend less on where it came from than on the reputation of its brand and manufacturer.

– Yuan Wei, a dealer

Don't repudiate

There are different ways to go about rebranding a domestic product as an exotic import.

Some companies that do this are looking to explore the international market and accelerate their internationalization. For example, Haier and Lenovo. These brands gained share in the domestic market, but used English names to promote themselves in the world market.

And then you have the com-

panies that do it just to pander to consumers who love foreign brands. It's among these companies that we see good and evil so mixed up, so we really have to be careful when sorting them out. Some are responsible manufacturers; others are cheats.

– Li Guangdou, president of a marketing company

Both are unconfident

Although China's GDP is number two in the world, the international status of our products does not match our economic influence. Some domestic companies use exotic names to tarnish their image and attract consumers. This not only shows that many domestic companies are not confident in their own business strengths, but that consumers have no faith in our domestic brands.

– Huang Shengmin, president of the Advertising Institute of Communication University of China

Permanent solution

The reason companies pull

this sleight of hand is to make more money.

Exotic names sound modern and aristocratic to many Chinese consumers, but what wins their trust and builds a good reputation is delivering quality products and honest service.

There is no shortcut to brand building: the solution is to develop in a natural way. You can learn from a foreign brand's experience, but don't blindly imitate it. Have some respect for your own advantages and strengths.

– Qi Luanyang, boss of an international trade company

Why protect the customers?

Consumers' general impression of foreign brands leads them to have higher expectations for anything with an exotic name. But these expectations are unrealistic. If the law is protecting such stupid consumers, then people's blind trust in brands with exotic names will only be encouraged.

– Yin Jianping, lawyer

Awash in art



Local residents fetch their used soap for Bruny.



Bruny's last soap project

By Wei Xi

Goele De Bruny, a 47-year-old Belgian artist, arrived in Beijing on July 6 to continue her unusual project: making art out of soap.

During her 10-day stay, she collected 500 used bars of soap and constructed a "soap map" according to her understanding of the bars.

The project, called "Soap: Antwerp to Beijing," went on display last week at Casual Locations, an art group in Beijing, and supported by the Belgian embassy.

Bruny had a special standard for selecting her soaps: it be used down to its base, she said.

Bruny said the used bars contained a part of a person's life, because when they were used, they were in direct contact with a human body. The soap that washed away was replaced by oils from the users' skin and fibers from their clothes.

Bruny said she hoped to show that these seemingly useless things still had their purpose.

Together with members of Casual Locations, Bruny spent eight days traveling the capital's hutong and streets, asking local residents for used bars of soap.

"We went to a place each day, such as Dongs, Gulou, Houhai



Goele De Bruny collects used soap for her presentation in Beijing.

Photos provided by Casual Locations

and 798, and collected about 500 bars," said Tata, a member of Casual Locations who preferred to be called by her nickname.

Tata said young people were more cautious about parting with their soap than elders.

"Many young people walked

away before learning what we were doing, while the elders warmly went into the homes to fetch their used soap," she said.

Tata said the neighborhood community of Nanluogu Xiang was especially helpful.

"They put our poster on the

community's notice board and made an announcement to call on the neighborhood to drop off their soap," Tata said. "More than 100 bars were from that neighborhood community."

Though residents were glad to help, not all understood Bru-

ny's project.

"An old man living in Nanluogu Xiang thought we were promoting the low-carbon concept, and a bicycle repairman we met at Dongs brought us a new bar of soap because he thought we wanted to our wash our clothes but did not have soap," Tata said.

Before the performance on July 16, all the soap was washed gently and air-dried. "We only removed hairs from the bars and did not damage their original appearance or shapes," Tata said.

Hou Jianwen, artist and founder of Casual Locations, said he met Bruny at the European Ceramic Work Center in Holland last year and was inspired by her work.

"I invited her to give an art performance here in China," Hou said.

Before coming to China, Bruny collected used materials like soaps, sandpaper, matches and plastic table covers in Belgium for more than 20 years. Her first soap construction "Clean Language," was finished in 1995.

In 1998, Bruny began asking people for used soap. She had 350 pieces before arriving in Beijing.

Her next stop is Xiamen, Fujian Province, where she will repeat the project.

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BEIJING TODAY

Youth soccer camp promotes cultural exchange

By Li Zhixin

A soccer summer camp featuring 30 teams and more than 600 players from eight different countries opened this week in Beijing.

The teams, organized by the International Youth Football Summer Camp Committee, were divided into four age groups. Players' ages range from 12 to 18. They will play 75 games, with the champion taking home the "Great Wall Cup."

"The score is not important," said Orlando Muniz, a coach on the Brazilian Zico Soccer School Team, which lost its first two games before rebounding to beat the Russian New Energy Football Club Team. "Learning from each other through skills exchanges is key."

"Chinese soccer players have made great progress in their skills and team-building, and they have great potential for further development," he added.

Matevs Iaro Beltrao Dasilva, a 12-year-old Brazilian player, said he and his teammates all got identical haircuts before leaving for Beijing in a show of unity, and to deepen the impression his team might leave.

A coach from a Russian team, echoing Muniz's words, was satisfied with his team's play even in defeat. "They did their best and were really excited about the opportunity to play with players from all around the world."

"This is first time our team



Beijing Sunshine vs. Russian New Energy Football Club.

Photo provided by Beijing Olympic Development Association

has gone abroad and played on such huge fields at the Beijing Olympic Sport Center," said Nirita Klimenko, a 14-year-old who has played soccer for half his life. "The more important thing is we can accumulate experience from par-

ticipating in such big games, as the games are really competitive."

Off the field, the players will visit the Great Wall, watch kung fu performances, learn mask painting, attend Peking Opera shows and practice calligraphy

and ceramic crafts during the weeklong camp.

The camp is sponsored by the Beijing Olympic Development Association, Beijing Sport Bureau and Beijing Youth League Committee.

Health challenge helps people get fit

By Wei Xi

The World Health Store (WHS) announced last Saturday that it will launch its second 12-Week Challenge starting next month, when it will provide professional guidance to contestants about keeping fit through discipline, nutrition and diet.

Fifty contestants took part in the competition last year and 10 were selected as finalists. A total of 100,000 yuan was awarded.

This year, the competition will be expanded to include both Beijing and Shanghai, with 250,000 yuan's worth of cash and prizes.

During the 12-week competition, contestants will receive tips about training and diet from certified trainers and nutritionists.

Free group classes will also be offered over the weekend in Beijing such as a boot camp, heyrobics – Swedish-style aerobics – and pilates. In Shanghai, free TRX classes and circuit training classes will be offered amongst others.

"The finalists will be the ones with the most inspirational story and transformation," said Aj Song, WHS' Beijing marketing and events manager.

"Enhancing lives isn't simply a tagline – we truly want to help people make a positive change



Contestants at the party last Saturday

Photo provided by Aj Song

for their health," he said.

Paul Afshar, a 28-year-old British business communication consultant, is a first-time participant.

He said he was a regular gym-goer and always dreamed of having the perfect body and improving his fitness. But though he plays sports and runs frequently, he's not sure he's training properly.

"I think the contest is a fantastic way to encourage and guide people to keep in shape," he said. "There are so many people who want to have the ideal body but don't know how to get it, or need a helping hand."

Nathan Holdstein, a 26-year-old American, is another con-

testant. "After learning about the contest, I decided I've had enough [of being overweight]," he said. "Enough of the discomfort of squeezing onto airplane seats, enough of people judging me based on my size, enough wondering what I would look and feel like if I were in better shape, and enough of telling myself I have a large frame and there's nothing I can do about it."

Holdstein set a goal for himself: to lose 8 to 12 kilograms.

He said he also liked the flexibility of the program.

"It is important to provide participants with suggested options for health supplements and exercise classes, but still give

them the chance to incorporate their own plans, either with or in place of what World Health Stores has arranged," he said.

Australian Dalwyn Bateson was one of the finalists for the first WHS 12 Week Challenge, and has applied for this year's contest once again.

She said the contest last year was inspirational to her.

"My primary goal was to lose weight, and my secondary goal was to boost my energy levels," Bateson said. "I enjoyed the 12-week deadline – it is result-driven and the countdown is encouraging."

Bateson said the contest helped her develop good eating habits and prolonged her sleeping hours. She's participating again this year because she feels she has lapsed into poor habits recently.

Bateson encouraged all contestants stick to the goals they set and keep a healthy lifestyle even after the contest ends.

WHS 12 Week Challenge

Cost: Free

Email:

aj@worldhealthstore.com.cn

Website:

whs-12weekchallenge.com

Deadline for application: July 31 for contestants in Beijing; July 30 for contestants in Shanghai

Event

INN monthly meeting

The International Newcomers' Network (INN) is a non-governmental organization that aims to provide newcomers necessary information to adapt to life in Beijing and an opportunity to meet new friends. It meets on the last Monday of each month. Topics discussed include schools, medical facilities, clubs and charitable organizations.

Where: Capital Club Athletic Center (Jingcheng Dasha Julebu), 3rd Floor, Low Rise Capital Mansion, 6 Xinyuan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 10 am – noon, last Monday of each month

Cost: 50 yuan (including coffee, tea and pastries)

Tel: 8486 2225 ext.136

Sailing at Beidaihe

Looking for a weekend getaway? Make waves and sail on the beautiful waters of Beidaihe. Qualified instructors will be present to teach newcomers all the basics. A party and barbecue on the beach will follow.

Where: the meeting point to be decided

When: July 23-24

Cost: 1,900 yuan for adults, 1,600 yuan for children (including sailing, accommodation and meals)

Tel: 5900 0276

Weekend fun with Adoptaman at Chaoyang beach

Join Adoptaman for an unforgettable afternoon at Chaoyang beach. Adoptaman has planned an afternoon of swimming, beach volleyball, water guns and a variety of food. This occasion marks a good time to make new friends and spend quality time with former friends.

Where: Chaoyang Park, 1 Nongzhan Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 10:30 am – 5 pm, July 23

Cost: 150 yuan (including entrance, refreshments and water guns)

Email: forian@adoptaman.com

Screening: Recording A'er

Recording A'er is a documentary about the Qiang ethnic group, which had to start over after the destruction of their hometown in the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake. Highly recommended by Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center, this project is determined to give a comprehensive record of Qiang culture and restore the villagers' dignity and confidence in their customs.

Where: Penghao Theater, 35 Dongmianhua Hutong off Nanlouxiang, Gulou, Xicheng District

When: 3-4:30 pm, July 23

Cost: Free

Email: info@bjchp.org

(By Wei Xi)

Transportation cards make city travel easy



Beijing transportation IC card

Xu Jiansong / CFP Photo

By Xinji Letu

With summer here, many tourists are coming to Beijing. Given the high pressure on the city's traffic system, using an IC card to take public transportation might be a smart move to save both money and time.

Jeremy Sebastian, 32, has been working in Beijing as a consultant at a multinational company for three years. Last summer, he told his friends who were coming to visit to buy an IC card to see the city.

"I think it is convenient if you plan to use public transportation," Sebastian said.

IC cards are issued by the city's public transportation authority and can be used

like bus or subway tickets after charging the card with money.

Most of the capital's permanent residents have transportation cards because they save money. Bus passengers with cards can get a 60 percent discount on their fare, and subway users save time by avoiding the ticket line.

The cards are sold in most subway stations and in many bus terminals. Official identification papers are not required for their purchase.

The cards require a 20-yuan deposit, and the applicant will be issued the card immediately after charging an initial 20 yuan to the account.

There are 89 bus stations open daily from 7 am to 7 pm where card holders

can recharge their transportation cards. The website bjbus.com has a map to help locate the nearest station. Almost every subway station has similar machines. The card's maximum balance is 1,000 yuan.

When the card is no longer needed, visit the terminal station of Bus 28 in the Central Business District or the Fuxingmen Subway Station in Xicheng District to reclaim your deposit.

There are several other places that handle card returns and credit refunds. For more information, visit bjbus.com or call 6396 0088.

As part of the digital Beijing project, IC cards can also be used to pay for food and other goods at select shops and supermarkets throughout the capital.

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyinying@ynet.com

How much does an express train ticket from Tianjin to Beijing cost and how long is the train? I have a 9:30 pm flight at Capital International Airport. Can I catch it if I board the train in Tianjin at 7 pm?

Express trains beginning with the letter C cost 58 yuan for hard seats and 68 yuan for soft seats. The trains take 30 minutes. However, they arrive at Beijing South Railway station, which is quite far from the airport. You will have to take subway Line 4 to Line 10, and then transfer to the Airport Express. You should take the 6:30 pm to be on the safe side. For more information about train schedules, visit chinahighlights.com.

I was recently offered a job by ChinaESL, but the company said it cannot give me a work visa until I come to Beijing and sign a formal contract. Is this normal? I really do not want to go to Beijing with my tourist visa and get stranded without a job or a work visa.

It's quite normal. More than 90 percent of the schools give you a work visa only after meeting you and signing a contract. Some foreigners come with an invitation letter, but they often don't take the school's job offer or even show up for the interview. ChinaESL has a good reputation in Beijing, so it is probably trustworthy.

I am looking for a place to play volleyball. Indoor or beach volleyball is fine. Of course, it's best if I can play with other people. I was hoping you could give me some recommendations.

Shichahai Sport School is a good place to play indoor volleyball. It's near Houhai and the cost is acceptable, but you will need to book in advance. It also has a decent volleyball league. Its website is volleyer.net.

University Stadium of Beijing on North Third Ring Road also has indoor volleyball and there is a group of regulars. You can find their information at niwota.com/active/545072, but it is only in Chinese.

If you want to play beach volleyball, Chaoyang Park would be a good choice.

Some universities like Beijing Foreign Studies University also have outdoor volleyball courts, but no beach.

(By Wei Xi)

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Nostalgic for hutong life



Song Dong

Song's six-year project to revive an old lifestyle

By He Jianwei

Old objects are our touchstones. Whether an old bike, a campstool or an old home, the void they leave in our lives is one filled by nostalgia.

Song Dong remembers his life in the hutong as crowded but harmonious. To preserve the memory, he has decorated his gallery to look like an old courtyard, filling its exhibition halls with objects from the past.

"I always remember my mother telling me we are poor people, and that no matter how wealthy we become, poverty will always run in our veins. Maybe that poverty is what helps me to recover such neglected wisdom."



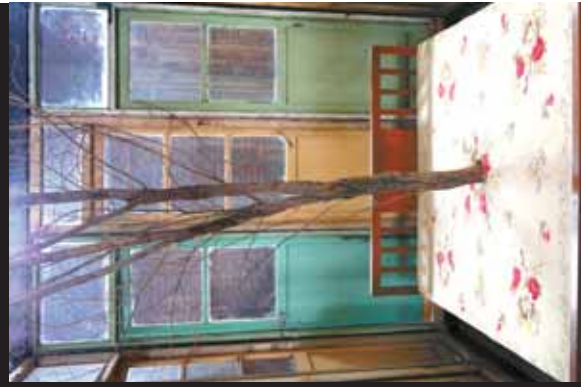
A line of pickle jars lies along the wall.



To enlarge their living space, many people built attics.

Song Dong collects soap to remember his mother's dedication to recycling.
Photo provided by UCCA

The truck of a grouting tree separates a bed.



Wisdom of the Poor (2005-2011)

Where: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), 798 Art District, 4th floor, Beijing
When: April 8 to September 8, daily except Mondays
Admission: 15 yuan, 10 yuan for students
Tel: 84 599 9269

"When the family got bigger, we tried everything to create more space. That was when the shelter and attic appeared. When you live in a limited space, it forces you to find clever ways to solve the problem."

Wisdom of the Poor is as much an exhibition as it is a journey into the past. Its main hall is a house with an attic for doves, and its corridor walls are the final resting places of a rusted bicycle, a line of pickle jars and piles of tiles and wood.

While it is only now being made public, work on the exhibition began in 2005. Song was collaborating with his mother Zhao Xiangqun on the installation *Waste War*.

The two collected numerous everyday possessions – all old and busted – such as legless dolls, blocks of soap, bottles, pans, plates, tubs, basins, oil flasks and blankets.

Song decided to share his art with his mother when his father died in 2002. The project was a way to help his mother sort out her memories and to rethink consumer culture.

Many of the possessions who suffered the lean years of the 1950s and 1960s came from industries and thrify in managing their households. Song's mother was among them.

When he began helping his mother tidy up her belongings, Song found that she had stockpiled an unbelievable amount of stuff that she was reluctant to part with. The household items took up every corner in their courtyard, even filling an abandoned air raid shelter.

Song realized that courtyard residents made the best use of their limited space. He often got grating pleasure from watching his mother sort through the things. To Song, he had to find out how the poor could achieve more while living with less space. Most built kitchens outside their homes or in an alley. In some houses, the pillars were actually the trunks of growing trees.

The first house his parents lived in was smaller than 6 square meters, and their first bed was made of wooden crates. "When the family got bigger, we tried everything to create more space. That was when the shelter and attic appeared. When you live in a limited space, it forces you to find clever ways to solve the problem," Song said last Saturday at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art.

Song visited many courtyards to collect different stories of how people transformed their homes, streets and communities. In his project, he showed how to enlarge a bedroom. Previously, the bedroom could only contain a bed that was 1.8 meters long. When the son grew to be 1.9 meters, the father had to make the room 10 centimeters bigger.

It was impossible to just knock out the wall, so the parents first made a grouting wall outside of existing wall, which made the room 10 centimeters bigger. Gradually, they built an external wall and demolished the internal one.

"It took one year for them to finish the alterations. The son had to curl up on the bed during that time," Song said.

After the Tangshan Earthquake of 1976, which killed more than 240,000, many people in Beijing began building shelters in their courtyards.

After the disaster, it seemed that the neighbors had a silent agreement about the distribution of public space. No one founded the shelters that other families had. "It was only in the 1990s that these spaces started coming down," he said.

Born in 1966, Song did not realize the wisdom of the poor when he was young. It was only when he got older that he realized how much it had affected his life.

"I always remember my mother telling me we are poor people, and that no matter how wealthy we become, poverty will always run in our veins. Maybe that poverty is what helps me to recover such neglected wisdom," Song said. The wisdom of the poor is a kind of wisdom that in exercising personal rights one can rebalance public and private space.

For the most part, urbanization has smashed that balance. When neighborhoods were altered, people's habits changed. People became wasteful, indifferent to their neighbors and careless about pollution.

To convey the shift, Song made a piece about a black and a white cat. His inspiration was Deng Xiaoping's saying, "No matter whether it's a black cat or white cat, if it can catch a mouse, it's a good cat."

The exhibition is a collection of objects that are responsible for us. Pragmatism is what most people believe in, but aside from their own interests, they see nothing precious in life," he said.

In the past, Song made art for his parents. Today he makes it for his daughter, who he hopes can inherit his "simple wisdom."

The exhibition was first arranged by Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York in 2008. Because of the global financial crisis, its public debut was pushed back to this year.



Almost every family had a two-door wardrobe four decades ago.



Song Dong collects abandoned chairs from the city's hutong.



The labyrinth of single beds shows how people use every bit of space.



Beijing Flavor (Jing Wei'er)
By Cui Daiyuan, 153pp, Shenghuo Dushu and Xinzhong Publishing Company, 18 yuan

By Li Zhixin

Fans of Beijing's historic culture met at Sculpting in Time Cafe last Saturday to recall the city's vanishing way of life with cultural celebrities Cui Daiyuan and Zhen Ni.

Cui, author of *Beijing Flavor (Jing Wei'er)*, said the fastest way to learn about the old capital is through its local foods.

"Old Beijingers are decent and polite, but they absolutely cannot put up with losing dignity. That character shows up in their diets: both rich and poor families have great cooking skills," he said.

In the past, diet was closely associated with astrology. "Old Beijingers were picky about which foods should be eaten in each season," he said. Spring was the time for *chunbing*, summer for sesame paste noodles, autumn for sausage and winter for boiled mutton.

"Today, a lot of Beijing foods are losing their authenticity to appeal to outsiders," he said. "If the demand for authentic food vanishes, that will be the death of Old Beijing."

The two also mentioned the forgotten model on which Beijing was designed.

"The old city was designed to

resemble the mythical hero Nezha, who appears in *Journey to the West* and *Investiture of the Gods*," said Zhen Ni, the 30-year-old Manchu marketing director of Jianfu Palace Garden in the Forbidden City.

She said Zhengyangmen represents Nezha's head, Tian'anmen his pericardium, Wumen his heart, Beihai, Zhonghai and Nanhai his stomach, Shichahai his bladder, Shejitan his spleen, Chaoyangmen and Fuchengmen his hands, Andingmen and Deshengmen his feet, Dongyue Temple and Baita Temple his wind-fire wheels and the red wall of the Forbidden City his clothes.

Cui and Zhen said that walking the city's hutong is one of the most direct ways to experience Old Beijing. However, many people forget that the names of each hutong tell much about their origins.

Hutong clustered around old wells have jing in their name, such as Dongxiaojing Hutong, Datongjing Hutong, Sanyanjing Hutong and Kushujing Hutong.

Some hutong are named for their shape, such as the Xiguaner Hutong, which looks like a vein, Koudai Hutong, which looks like a bag, Yueyuer Hutong, which looks like crescent

moon, and Biandan Hutong, which looks like a pole.

Other hutong are named for traditional functions, such as Bingsima Hutong, the location of a former official body that oversaw arms and warhorses, Qianliang Hutong, where Manchu aristocrats picked up their paychecks, Denglongku Hutong, a lantern-making area, and Ciqiku Hutong, a porcelain factory and storage.

"Today, it's actually foreigners who have a deeper understanding of hutong culture," Cui said. "We Chinese are becoming very indifferent to this history as we pursue urban development and economic growth."

"In the past, teahouses were the place to experience Old Beijing. They used to bring together people from every walk of life since they served cheap yet excellent drinks," he said. "Today, that is lost. Teahouses are now just a place for businesspeople to talk business."

Cui said he hoped more people can realize that Old Beijing is not limited to the Forbidden City, hutong, Peking opera, and roast duck - they are all components of a lifestyle.

"Old Beijing was about a simple, slow life that helped people to find truth and happiness," he said.

The search for old Beijing



Cui Daiyuan (left) recalls the city's vanishing lifestyle.

Photo by Li Zhixin

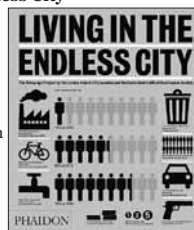
Trends Lounge book listing

Located at The Place, Trends Lounge is a bookstore and cafe with a wide selection of books about international art, design and architecture.

Living in the Endless City

Edited by Ricky Burdett and Deyan Sudjic, 432pp, Phaidon Press, \$69.95

This book includes information from the Urban Age project, a series of conferences held by the London School of Economics that explore vital fields of urban development from security to climate change.



Cannes Cinema

By Serge Toubiana, 336pp, Phaidon Press, \$39.95

This book is a visual history of the Cannes Film Festival from its beginnings in 1939 to the present. It includes 600 photographs of film actors and directors taken by three generations of photographers from the Traverso family. Each portrait is accompanied by a short anecdotal text written by Serge Toubiana, director of the Cinematheque Francaise.



Nobuyoshi Araki: Self • Life • Death

By Nobuyoshi Araki, 196pp, Phaidon Press, \$49.95

Nobuyoshi Araki is a controversial artist, who consistently challenges artistic and social conventions in post-war Japan by referencing the country's history of restraint, commercialism and eroticism. The book includes his major works, such as *Sentimental Journey* in 1971, *Winter Journey* in 1991 and *Erotos* in 1993.



(By He Jianwei)

Reality from a romantic perspective

By Xinji Letu

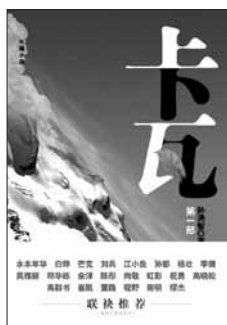
Sun Yongzhi, a media veteran born in the 1960s, recently realized a long-postponed dream: to write a novel about his romantic early years after college graduation.

Kava, the book, tells the story of a group of college graduates born in 1968. Since 1990, the year of their graduation, their careers and personal lives have been filled with twists and turns. The book offers perspective on the tremendous changes China has experienced in the last two decades.

"When I was studying at Peking University, I had a strong sense that I should write something to sum up the experiences of our generation. Today, we are the backbone of society," Sun said Sunday at Book Fun.

Sun describes his book as a history of the struggle of those born in 1960s. "There is a difference between people born in 1960s and those born in the 1980s and 1990s," Sun said. "Those born in 1980s and 1990 tend to focus on results, but our generation focuses on the process."

Sun said people in his age group enjoy hard work and "deal with it in a



Kava
By Sun Yongzhi, 421PP, Modern Press, 37 yuan

kind of romantic way."

Although *Kava* is Sun's first novel, it has been hailed as modern version of *Fortress Besieged*, one of the greatest 20th century Chinese novels.

The book is ripe with symbolism, both material and spiritual: a campus poet, a popular school beauty and a student from a rich family.

Over the past 20 years, China

has been through earth-taking transformations, Sun said. "Each time I attended a classmate's party, I feel those changes acutely. Some became millionaires and others jobless."

Their perseverance is something the younger generation should learn, Sun said.

In the face of skyrocketing home prices and increasing inflation, those born in 1980s and 1990s bear a mountain of pressures, especially the to become home and car owners before pursuing love and marriage.

Sun said younger people should have a more romantic attitude to dealing with those challenges. "You should be confident when you confront them. If you have doubts about yourself, you can miss a lot of opportunities," he said.

The book is named for kava, a crop of the western Pacific whose roots are chewed to ease relaxation. Sun said his book works in a similar way, to help people adjust their attitudes to find happiness and extend joy.

"That was something I was looking for when writing the book, so I chose the name as a label of happiness and love," he said.

Scientists team up to smash web rumors



Photos provided by Zhang Weiwei

In many workplaces, the day begins with a skimming of the oddest and funniest posts made to microblogs like Sina Weibo and Twitter. When people pass along these bits of information, they serve as their own mini-media producers.

Of course, that means rumors are spreading faster than ever before. All information is becoming instantaneous and fragmented, and verification is an afterthought.

The web seems like a magnet for three types of rumors: unverified social and financial news, like Guo Meimei posing as a China Red Cross Fund employee; entertainment gossip, like whether Tse Ting Fung is having another affair; and rumors about daily life, which account for about 60 percent of the total.

Rumor Crushing Workers, a registered VIP community on Weibo, is one of the most famous groups trying to ferret out and expose the worst of this third category.

Yuan Xinting, 30, is the team leader. With a master's degree in organic chemistry, she loves scientific discoveries and truth.

"Unlike fake social news that comes and goes quickly, rumors related to daily life get twisted into a pseudoscience that affects people's choice of food and drink, their way of keeping healthy and their understanding of natural or interesting phenomenon," she said.

Many of the rumors have been around for years – some for generations. That makes smashing them all the more difficult, she said.

Inspired by the Discovery Channel's popular series *MythBusters*, Yuan founded her community last September. So far, its six members have smashed more than 200 rumors.

"We were being driven mad by the ridiculous rumors popping up online at the time, like that McDonald's chickens had six wings and legs, or that milk mixed with papaya fruit could cause women to develop larger breasts," said Hualuo Chengshi, a community member.

"These were obviously hokey to anyone with basic scientific knowledge. That's what motivated us to start disproving this nonsense."

But the workload was more than they estimated.

The popularity of microblogs has been enormous. More than 195 million Chinese web users are microblogging, and the remaining 255 million web users may soon jump on the trend.

Rumor Crushing Workers' workload has increased from smashing one rumor per week to four or five.

One of the current rumors is that semen can cause shower drains to clog up. It apparently originated from a Durham University notification in Britain regarding masturbation in the men's communal showers.

"Blockage in most university showers is caused by human hair. However, over the last term we found that many of these blockages were in fact caused by large quantities of human semen. This is intolerable, and we will be using DNA testing to track the culprits," the message read.

It was purportedly signed by the building director.

"It had millions of comments and retweets within a night. We do know that condoms can block sewers in an university shower room, but never have we heard the same about semen, a fluid," Yuan said.

"Semen is sticky and seems likely to harden when heated by shower water. When combined with human hair and shampoo wrappers, it's not hard to imagine a blockage could happen," wrote a netizen using the handle Cozy Hoo.

Rumor Crushing Workers smash such myths by tracking down existing articles and essays related to the topic and asking professors and scientists from a related field to share their expert knowledge.

For this rumor, they talked to Deng Hongkui, a doctor from the School of Life Sciences at Peking University and an expert in cellular reproduction.

Once leaving human body, which is at a temperature of about 36 C to 37 C, semen liquefies within three to five minutes, Deng said.

"It is unlikely to gel or form any kind of jelly," Yuan said. They published Doctor Deng's response on Sina Weibo in the form of easily digested words and metaphors.

But how does such a crazy rumor spread in the first place?

Most start out as simple gossip, especially speculation. Many people make blanket statements about what they think has occurred in a given situation.

After that, the power is in the numbers.

Fang Zhouzi, a famous Chinese rumor smasher, wrote in his blog that there are plenty of gullible people who will eat up any rumors that appeal to their biases.

Fang also emphasized the repetitive nature of rumors: the more often people hear a rumor, the more likely they will believe it and help to spread it.

"When a rumor becomes

By Chu Meng

The explosion of dubious information available on the Internet has made every day a possible April First Fools' Day. New publishing channels like microblogs make it faster than ever for users to spread gossip and news.

Thankfully, a number of rumor-smashing hobbyists have started to organize online to safeguard the truth and educate the masses with concrete scientific knowledge.



Rumor Crushing Workers is a registered VIP community on Sina Weibo.



The Discovery Channel's popular series *MythBusters* inspired Yuan's rumor-crushing community.

attached to a politician or celebrity, we see it as garbage the first time we hear it. Then it gets repeated on blogs and in the gossip magazines. Soon our friends are saying it. It soon morphs into fact, and we feel no guilt for helping to spread it," Fang wrote.

But not all rumors can be successfully crushed by Yuan's community. The most persistent has been that used batteries can be

recharged by storing them in a refrigerator.

"This one will require numerous laboratory studies, a huge pool of samples and verifiable support from chemists and physicists. We don't have the resources for all that," Yuan said.

"Scientists are already hurting for funding, and they can hardly spare the budget that would be necessary for such a frivolous experiment."

Be a kitchen magician with tricky appliances

By Chu Meng

Louisa Li, 30, is a full-time housewife who introduced *Beijing Today* to some magical kitchen appliances at a home party this summer. We asked her to share some knowledge on us about her wares.



EUP Movie Time Popcorn Maker, 169 yuan on Taobao Mall



Mini Chocolate Fountain Machine, 488 yuan on Taobao Mall



Carnival Cotton Candy Maker, 109 yuan on Taobao Mall



Barrel-shape Popcorn Maker, 99 yuan



The Deni Ice Cream Maker with an ice crusher costs 499 yuan on eBuy.



CFP Photos

1. Mini Popcorn maker

Tired of microwave popcorn? Dreaming of capturing the classic smell of old-fashioned American movie theaters? A barrel of home-made popcorn is essential. There are many brands to choose from on Taobao, with one of the top-selling products being a made-in-China Midea lightweight plastic popcorn maker at 299 yuan. Another brand, EUP, sells for 169 yuan. The latter is smaller in size but features a hot-air booster pump to ensure safety. Popcorn is done within three minutes.

Louisa Li's tips:

Kernel quality is important. A coffee cup's size of kernels is enough for a barrel. Instead of margarine and sugar, people should use healthier olive oil, natural cream and butter. Be careful to not burn yourself on the steam.

2. Cotton candy maker

For party queens, a cotton candy maker is the perfect for impressing guests and making a tasty treat. Everyone loves cotton candy – right? It'll instantly bring back childhood memories of fairs, carnivals or theme parks. The European-style cotton candy maker, inspired by Italian cotton candy carts of the early 1900s, is easy to operate, safe and fun and costs 109 yuan on Taobao.

Louisa Li's tips:

This appliance works best at 26 C or lower. If the outside temperature is too hot, the sugar will stick to the stick and won't form a rich and puffy shape. Preheat the machine for five minutes to get the best results. Pour in granulated sugar instead of caster sugar. Slowly and steadily turn the stick in your hand to make a fine, smooth, puffy shape. Remember to

clean the machine immediately after it cools down.

3. Mini chocolate fountain machine

For chocolate lovers, the mini chocolate fountain machine at 488 yuan could be the ultimate weapon to wow guests. It's sure to leave an impression. Pour in some melted chocolate and watch it slowly cascade through the machine with a rich



Colorful stainless steel kettles, 268 yuan

aroma. This fountain dispenses half a kilogram of hot, molten chocolate, serving at least 10 guests. It works with virtually any type of chocolate, but is best with Belgian.

Louisa Li's tips:

This is only half the size of a standard chocolate fountain. Prepare diced fresh fruit, marshmallows or something else you'd like to dip. Melt the chocolate into paste in a soup pot in advance. Instead of buying chocolate bars, you should prepare your own chocolate paste with pure Belgium chocolate powder (easily found on Taobao) and fresh milk with only

a little

sugar. After the party, remember to pour any leftover chocolate milk into containers immediately. Otherwise, it will be difficult to clean the machine.

4. Ice cream maker

A delicious, tailor-made dessert is the perfect way to seal any dinner. With the ice cream maker, pour in ice cream power and milk. Have friends choose other ingredients such as fruits or nuts. The ice cream maker then does the rest, creating ice cream within 40 minutes. Several models are available online at different prices.

Nathome Ice Cream Maker, a Swiss brand, costs 238 yuan. Deni Ice Cream Maker, an American brand at 260 yuan, features for fashion design. Xiao Xiong Ice Cream Maker, a domestic brand, costs 60 yuan, but it's not fully automated.

Louisa Li's tips:

Ice cream powder has to be purchased on Taobao. There should be no preservatives or pigments in homemade ice cream, making it healthier than the supermarket variety. Low-fat milk, sugar-free yogurt and soy milk are all suitable replacements for whole milk. Feel free to overindulge in fruits and nuts in your home creation.

5. Colorful stainless steel electric kettles

Nathome's colorful stainless steel electric kettles at 268 yuan are great at limiting the amount of detritus that forms at the bottom of traditional kettles. They come in colors such as purple, champagne, lemon yellow, pink and apple green.

Louisa Li's tips:

Never use electric kettles to boil coffee, milk or fruit juice.

An artist's authentic Taiwanese recipes

By Annie Wei

It's common to hear Taiwanese people complain the only good Taiwanese food in town is the stuff they make.

Alice Chang, a book illustrator from Taiwan, reinforces that saying.

She moved to Beijing two months ago and often hosts parties at home, where she cooks for guests.

She's decided to share some recipes. The defining characteristics of Taiwan cuisine, she said, are small details, preparation and quality ingredients.



Alice Chang
Photo provided by Alice Chang

Cold shaojiu shrimp

Shaojiu is a traditional distilled rice wine. The shrimp are light, fresh and chewy, and strongly flavored when mixed with shaojiu and Chinese herbs.

1. Prepare 500 grams of fresh shrimp; no need to peel them.

2. Put the shrimp into boiling water with a little bit of sea salt; then take the shrimp out and put them into ice water to keep them tender and chewy texture.

3. Prepare the sauce: boil angelica root, Huangqi (astragalus root), wolfberries and red dates in water and shaojiu for five minutes. Turn off the fire and leave it at room temperature.

4. Place the shrimp and chopped scallions into the sauce, add some rice wine and freeze for one day.

Note: If you don't like the strong taste of Chinese herbs, you can swap them for something milder or just not use them.

Where to buy:

1. One can purchase Taiwanese shaojiu (25 yuan for a bottle of Hongbiao Liao) from the Taiwan supermarket Jiasiduo, or a bottle of Mr. Rice Wine (30 yuan for a bottle).

2. Sea salt (25 yuan for 450 grams) is available from Jiasiduo.

3. Chinese herbs are available at many drug stores.

Jiasiduo

Where: First floor, Building 4, Jiatailu Shangye Jie, Chaoyang District
Open: 10 am - 8 pm

Tel: 5135 7745

Mr. Rice Wine

Where: B1, Chaoshifa, 13 Ganjiakou, Xicheng District

Open: 4:30 - 6:40 pm

Tel: 15011154842

Chang recommends places to eat Taiwan snacks

1. Xiaowei Yansuji

It sells traditional Taiwan snacks like zhahuzhi (15 yuan), deep-fried cuttle fish balls; and yansuji (15 yuan), salty crispy chicken.

Zhahuzhi is strips of cuttlefish rolled in sweet potato flour, deep-fried and served with ginger sauce; yansuji is chicken marinated in wine, ginger and scallions, then deep-fried twice to make it extra crispy. Diners dip it in pepper and salt.

Where: The Taiwan snack eatery opposite Manning store at Exit C of Guomao subway station.

2. Jiasiduo

As a Taiwanese food chain store, it sells many simple meals and iced desserts. There are 16 kinds of rice set meals starting at 18 yuan, including Taiwan luroufan (stewed pork and rice) and Hakka shaoroufan (Hakka-styled barbecue pork and rice). Soups include huazhigeng (7 yuan), a soup of cuttlefish, onions and vegetables, with vinegar and sate sauce.

3. Jiasiduo delivers

Where: 1st floor, Building 4, Jiatailu Shangye Jie, Chaoyang District
Open: 10 am - 8 pm

Tel: 5135 7745

Taiwan abalone and pork

One can find this classic Taiwanese dish, traditionally paired with rice, at many fast-food restaurants, such as Yonghe King. But how did it become so mainstream?

Authentic lurou, stewed pork, features chunks of pork first marinated and stewed in fragrant soy-based sauce until tender.

The way one cooks it is complicated: if careless, the meat will come out dry and without its charms.

Quality lurou has a nice chewy texture. "Pork skin is very important in preparing lurou," Cheng said.

1. Purchase 500 grams of pork from a meat market. Make sure the meat is 70 percent fat and 30 percent lean. Ask the vendor to mince for convenience.

2. Dice pork skin.

3. Use sesame oil to fry garlic, ginger and the pork skin for two minutes, then add minced meat and fry; add rice wine, sugar, dark soy sauce, superior soy sauce, stock or water, as well as Chinese spices and stew for 60 to 90 minutes.

4. Add youcongso (see description below) and stew for another 20 minutes.

5. Steam the abalone for three minutes, then dice and add to the stew.

Notes: Chang said soy sauce is important to the dish's flavor. She suggests using soy sauce from Taiwan, which is available at The Pacific Plaza's supermarket.

Chinese herbs to add include anise, dates, Chinese peppers, dry chili peppers, wolfberries and cinnamon. Use a woven gauze bag to pack all the herbs.

Youcongso is a commonly used ingredient for Taiwan dishes. It is diced shallots with pork oil, and is available at Taiwan supermarkets.

Mango rice wine drink

Rice wine is widely used in Taiwanese dishes. Chang said she has also tried some local rice wines such as Mr. Rice Wine, a brand known through the city's Country Fair.

Chang said the 3-percent Mr. Rice Wine is fresh and easy to drink.

With the wine, she invented a simple recipe: Pour some three-degree rice wine onto ice cubes and add diced mango. "You can have a drink while eating some fruit," she said.



Cold shaojiu shrimp



Spicy diced beef



Stir-fried shells



Taiwanese Lurou Rice



Wine-stewed chicken

Photos by Yu Tingmei

Future of Chinese contemporary art

By He Jianwei

Fifty art students from 12 colleges and universities were awarded at the sixth "Giant Cup" Today National Art Students Annual Award on July 18 at Today Art Museum.

The Award, founded in 2006, aims to "give art students the opportunity to display their talent and build their confidence," said Zhang Zikang, director of the Today Art Museum.

Compared to previous events, more students have been awarded this year. "As a teacher at the China Academy of Art, I know that many students hesitate about whether they will be artists after graduation or not. It's important for them to be recognized," said Qiu Zhijie, a member of the jury.

Qiu personally awarded Shen Linghao, from Fudan University's Shanghai Institute of Visual Art, with a Qiu Zhijie Award for his photography.

Shen's work *View in Mind: Shanghai*, taken in 2009, captures several abandoned houses in Shanghai, including the old house of Chiang Ching-kuo, the son of Chiang Kai-shek, and the Jiangnan Shipyard.

Established in 1865, the Jiangnan Shipyard was moved north of urban Shanghai in 2009 to Changxing Island, located at the mouth of the Yangtze River. After the relocation, Shen visited the old site and took photos of the abandoned factory.

"Standing in those abandoned buildings, I forgot the times. The splendid history and the deserted scenes appeared in my mind together," Shen said.

In the last three months, the Award received over 10,000 works by 300 students from 300 colleges and universities. 251 works made it to the final competition, which covered Chinese painting, oil painting, print making, sculpture, installation, video and photography.

Declaration of Independence - "Giant Cup" Today National Art Students Annual Awards 2011

Where: 3rd floor exhibition hall of building 1, 2nd floor exhibition hall of building 2 and building 3, Today Art Museum, 32 Baizuiwan Lu, Chaoyang District
When: Until July 29, 10 am - 5 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5876 9804

5 Friday, July 22

Movie Still Life (2006)

Directed by Jia Zhangke, the film is set in the old village of

Fengjie, a small town on the Yangtze River slowly being destroyed by the building of the Three Gorges Dam. It tells the story of two people in search of their spouses.

Where: Culture Yard, 10 Shique Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: 7 pm
Admission: 25 yuan
Tel: 8404 4166

Nightlife Mademoiselle et son Orchestra

With six musicians from France, Canada and China, the band plays traditional French songs from Piaf, Brassens, Montant and French Jazz standards.

Where: V.A Bar, 13 Wudaoyu-

ing Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: 9:45 pm
Admission: 40 yuan
Tel: 58443638

Exhibition

Hypnosis Group Exhibition
This exhibition focuses on the discourse concealed beneath the cultural symbols of both Taiwan and the Mainland's contemporary art.

Where: Beijing Space, C4, Caochangdi Art Zone, Chaoyang District

When: Until August 4, daily except Monday, 10 am - 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5127 3246



Sunday, July 24

Exhibition Standing Alone - Zhang Fangbai Solo Exhibition

Zhang Fangbai's brushwork forms his own language of painting. It focuses on general outlines without giving much consideration to specific details.

Where: Asia Art Center, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until August 10, daily

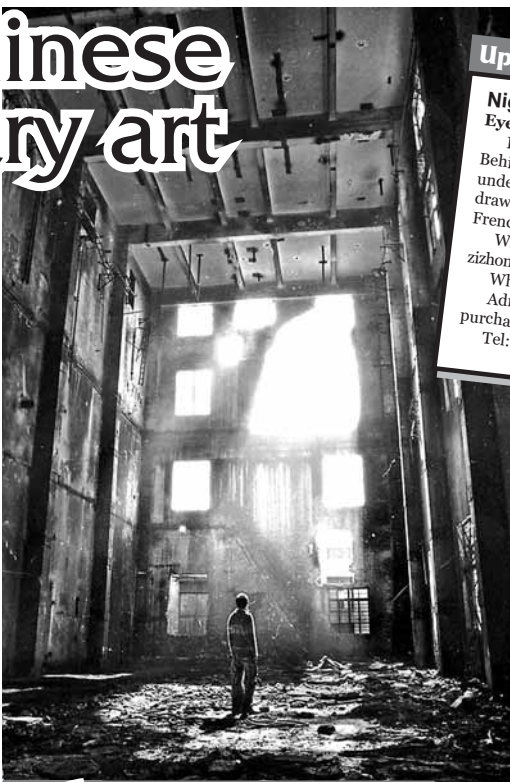
except Monday, 10 am - 6 pm
Admission: free
Tel: 59789709

Movie We are Alive (2010)

This Hong Kong documentary tells the stories of "bad" children in correctional facilities in Hong Kong, Macau and Japan.

Where: Train Spotting, C1, 46 Fangjia Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: 2 pm
Admission: free
Tel: 64060658



6 Saturday, July 23

Nightlife Devils at the Crossroad

With a sound that combines blues, punk, stoner and hard rock, Devils at the Crossroad play high energy rock and roll.

Where: Alanting, 1/F, Forte International Apartment, 235 Chaoyang Beilu, Chaoyang District

When: 9 pm
Admission: free
Tel: 8571 5168

Exhibition



Cao Xiaodong and Xie Hongjun Paintings Group Exhibition

Cao Xiaodong manipulates old photos from China, transformed with spots and speckles to give the impression of daguerreotypes. Xie Hongjun depicts public scenes from the 1960s and 1970s.

Where: EGG Gallery, 327,

Caochangdi Art Zone, Chaoyang District

When: Until August 31, daily except Monday, 10 am - 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 64328089

Movie



Manolito Gafotas (1999)

Although summer is approaching, Manolito Gafotas must spend his holiday in a small flat in Madrid with his mother, his grandfather and his younger brother. He looks forward to the arrival of his father, a lorry driver who will take them to the beach.

Where: Instituto Cervantes, 1A Gongti Nanlu, Chaoyang District

When: 7:30 pm
Admission: free
Tel: 5879 9666

Upcoming

Nightlife Eyes Behind

Formed in 2009 in Paris, Eyes Behind has been active in Paris's underground music scene and drawn much attention from the French independent music circle.

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-1 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: July 28, 9 pm
Admission: 60 yuan for advance purchase, 80 yuan at the door
Tel: 6404 2711

Stage in August

Concert

Myung-whun Chung and Asia Philharmonic Orchestra

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 4, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-800 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Sun Yingdi Piano Recital

Where: Multi-functional Theater of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 5, 7:30 pm
Admission: 200-280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Roger Lord Piano Recital

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall (inside Zhongshan Park), 18 Zhaodengyu Lu, Xicheng District

When: August 21, 7:30 pm
Admission: 20-100 yuan
Tel: 6417 7845

Dance

Rojas and Rodriguez's Flamenco

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 13-14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 160-680 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Drama

Crosstalk Travelers

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: August 5-7, 7:30 pm
Admission: 190-900 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

Hysterics

Where: Nine Theater (TNT), Chaoyang Culture Center, 12 Jintai Li, Chaoyang District

When: August 25-28, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-200 yuan, 50 yuan for students
Tel: 6551 6930

Opera

Rigoletto

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 25-27, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-800 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

(By He Jianwei)



Nightlife Half Mile Radius, Shuhari and ONC

Tokyo punks ONC bring a driving energy to every show, while Tokyo's Shuhari crafts slowly-building melodies and Taiwan's Half Mile Radius perform thoughtful and complex rock songs.

Where: Mao Live House, 111 Gulou Dongdajie, Dongcheng District

When: 8:30 pm
Admission: 50 yuan
Tel: 64027494

(By Xinji Letu)

Tips to avoid a summer cold

By Li Zhixin

Even though many people think of a cold as a winter problem, summer days spent in a cool, air-conditioned environment are just as likely to result in illness.

A second cold season

Tommy Wang, a 28-year-old IT worker, went to Chaoyang Park Beach Resort to swim with several friends last Saturday. They played basketball and worked up a sweat on the beach.

That night he developed a high fever while browsing the web on his computer.

By the next afternoon, when his parents sent him to the hospital, he was too ill to get out of bed and eat.

Yang Jun, a 32-year-old accountant, also contracted a summer cold by sleeping with her fan on all night last Tuesday.

She had to ask for sick leave and stay at home due to the high fever, frequent sweats and a persistent cough.

"There are two types of colds: viral and wind-induced. The climatic factors of summer can cause summer colds, which are also called wind-heat colds," said Yuan Huiqing, director of the Respiratory Department at Beijing Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

"People can be easily affected by the cold in summer since they are using more energy and are in a period of reduced immunity," Yuan said.

"Some people sleep outside their covers or in drafty areas, which make it easier for wind-heat to penetrate the lungs. The body cannot adapt quickly to the difference between internal and external temperatures," she said.

The best way to prevent such colds is to avoid being exposed to air conditioning after exercise and to wear clothing when getting up to urinate at night.

Most summer colds pass within a week.

"A Cold alone is not a serious ailment: it's a self defense and goes away within a week. Patients should drink plenty of water, get appropriate rest and keep a window open to ensure their home has fresh air," she said.

"Long-term exposure to air conditioning puts people at risk of not only wind-head, but also other pathogenic microorganisms," she said.

Symptoms

Summer colds have different symptoms from winter colds. Consult the following list to know what type of cold you are having:

1. Wind-heat type: Symptoms include fever; aversion to cold; shivers; sneezes; coughs; runny nose with yellow mucus; headache; light sweats; itchy throat; swollen tonsils; thirst; rapid pulse; and a tongue that is red on the tip or sides.

Serious wind-heat can cause heat stroke, central nervous system infection, acute gastroenteritis and bacillary dysentery.

2. Wind-cold pattern: Symptoms include slight fever; aversion to cold; shivers; sneezes; coughs; runny nose with white, watery mucus; severe headache; floating, tight pulse; and a thin, white coating on the tongue.

3. Viral flu: Symptoms include a slight fever; headache; fatigue; nausea; vomiting; tightness in the chest; abdominal distension; diarrhea; and deep-yellow urine.

The easiest way to tell the difference between wind-heat and wind-cold is through "heat signs," Yuan said. "Mucus will be yellow when heat is present. Cold causes clear or white mucus."

Although both can result in headache, a wind-heat headache tends to be slighter than a wind-cold headache, which can be painful and debilitating. Wind-heat muscle aches also are slight when compared to wind-cold body muscles aches.

Yuan said a summer cold typically starts with a sore throat, then progresses to become a cough with sticky phlegm or blocked sinuses. "In Chinese Medicine, we say this is a type of warm pathogen attack," she said.

"Colds often start when we are tired or under stress, sad or have too much grief in our lives," she said.

Food therapy

1. Pears: Fresh and boiled pears have been used to treat wind-heat colds in China for centuries.

2. Mung beans and tea: Mash 15 grams of mung beans, mix them with 10 grams of tea and boil them together for 10 minutes in hot water. Drink the mixture once a day.

3. Olives: Olives are good at clearing heat and treating a swollen throat. Chew whole olives several times a day.

4. Dark plums: Boil several plums with 90 grams of brown sugar and drink it twice a day.

5. Carambola: Carambola helps to treat a wind-heat cough and sore throat.

Prevention

1. Wash your hands often.
2. Dress for the temperature and don't spend too much time in drafty places or in the direct line of a fan.
3. Drink plenty of pure water, vegetable juice and fresh fruit juice to stay hydrated and boost your immune system.
4. Avoid stressful work as it weakens your immune system and leaves you susceptible to colds.
5. Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep at night. If you have a cold, nap during the hottest part of the day to help your immune system recover.
6. Avoid eating such foods such as eggs, meat, cheese and anything heavy with starch when you have a cold.
7. Try to avoid processed foods and junk foods. Fresh foods and freshly prepared meals from natural sources are the best way to protect your health.
8. Avoid sweets, as they can cause your white blood cells to become lethargic when faced with cold viruses and other foreign invaders.
9. Do not eat anything that is cold. Even though it is very hot in the summer, you should not eat too much cold ice cream or fruit or drink too much cold beer or soda. Cold foods can cause blood vessels to shrink, leading to gastrointestinal disorders, diarrhea and poor digestion.
10. Avoid touching your face, especially your nose, mouth and eyes.
11. Clean doorknobs, light switches, telephones, remote controls and sinks frequently.

CFP Photo

Old umbrella crafts in Luzhou



By Zhang Dongya

Many elders in their 50s or 60s can still recall when they used oiled paper umbrellas as teenagers, which were decorated with various floral patterns. These days, about the only place one encounters these old-fashioned umbrellas is in TV shows or films.

But a factory in Luzhou, Sichuan Province, actually still produces these traditional umbrellas. The craft was recognized as "intangible cultural heritage" in 2008, and in its present incarnation represents the sixth generation of the craft.



Oiled paper umbrellas were recognized as "intangible culture heritage," raising awareness of the value of this old technique.



Colorful umbrellas hung from the ceiling in the old plant.



The old factory is located in a Qing-dynasty building.

In Fenshuiling Town, Luzhou, in the south-east part of Sichuan Province, is an ancient building first constructed during the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It houses the Luzhou Fenshui Umbrella Factory, owned by Bi Liufu.

The factory has more than 100 retired workers making oiled paper umbrellas by hand. The eldest worker is older than 90, and dozens more are older than 80.

Colorful umbrellas hang from the ceiling, while old pictures showing the factory's history and important moments hang from the walls.

It's believed that oiled paper umbrellas were invented by the wife of Lu Ban, a craftsman who lived around the transition from the Spring and Autumn period (BC 770-475) to the Warring States period (BC 475-221).

The old umbrellas are heavy, built from wood, and very durable in the wind. In the past, there were umbrella fixers on street corners, much like how one finds bike repairmen these days. The umbrella fixers would brush new coats of oil onto the umbrella.

The Luzhou Fenshui Umbrella Factory is currently the only manufacturer of oiled paper umbrellas, which are fast becoming collectibles.

Bi, a sixth generation umbrella-maker, learned the craft when he was young.

All the umbrellas are made by hand. Bi said they use bamboos. "The bamboo that's required is sun-exposed moso bamboo that is at least three years old," Bi said. The wood that's used is paulownia wood found in mountains, and the paper are from Guizhou Province.

The workers use self-manufactured simple tools; they are able to work without electricity. Usually, a custom umbrella takes about seven days to finish, while fancier umbrellas take even more time.

There are more than 100 steps involved in making an umbrella by hand, including grooving bamboo, making the wooden top, the handle and stretchers, and sorting and dyeing. More than 100 tools are utilized in the process.

Bi said since the paper umbrellas are made of wood oil, which has the effect of warding off cold and moisture according to Chinese traditional medicine, most senior workers are able to keep healthy in the work environment.

Continued on page 21...

Photo provided by Luzhou Fenshui Umbrella Factory



The exquisite umbrellas attract many foreigners.

Photos by Bi Yuanshen



Most workers at the umbrella factory are retired from other jobs.



Bi Liufu, a sixth generation oiled paper umbrella craftsman, still makes umbrellas in the factory.

...continued from page 20

Greasing the umbrella with oil requires the most skill. Veteran workers use their hands. The process is also affected by the weather – too much moisture will make the paper crinkle. Therefore, workers pay lots of attention to the weather when they are making umbrellas.

One tool that's used is the stone press, probably the oldest machine in the umbrella-making industry. It is a piece of slate on which workers print floral paper for the umbrellas. The stone press is placed in the only room with windows in the building.

Bi said in the past, he felt embarrassed when people saw him still using the old-fashioned machine. After his oiled paper umbrellas were recognized as intangible culture heritage, his crafts and old tools were recognized as heritage, too. Nowadays, he will show the stone press first when visitors come.

"It is very likely the last stone press used in the country," he said. The stone is glossy due to hundreds of years of use.

Fenshuiling Town is a typical southern town comprising old cottages with black-tiled paths. On the street, you can see locals holding oiled paper umbrellas during rainy days or to protect themselves against the sun. They come in bright colors and feature exquisite patterns.

Where: 98 Jinfeng Lu, Fenshuiling Town, Jiangyang District, Luzhou, Sichuan

Getting there: A flight to Luzhou Lantian Airport from Beijing International Airport takes about three hours. Or take a train to Chongqing and transfer to a bus to Luzhou (three-hour ride). The fast train to Chongqing takes 15 hours, with ticket prices starting at 409 yuan. After getting to Luzhou, you can take a bus in Lantian Passenger Station to Fenshuiling, which takes one hour. The price of ticket is 4 yuan.

Tel: 0830-3620203

Where to buy oiled paper umbrellas: The factory is the only manufacturer in the country. Recently, the factory opened a shop on Taobao, offering some 100 umbrellas. Since it is specialized in Luzhou, each umbrella produced here will have the mark of intangible culture heritage on it and the thumb photo of Master Bi Liufu as its trademark. Prices range from 100 to 300 yuan.



All paper umbrellas are made by hand and require a 100-step process.

Photos by Bi Yuanshen

Nearby attractions

Yaoba Ancient Town

First built during the North Song Dynasty (960-1127), Yaoba is a well-known ancient town in Luzhou. It has a 1,000-meter old street with Ming (1368-1644) and Qing buildings straddling it. Some ancient archways and temples are well preserved. It was once dubbed "little Hong Kong" because of its many merchants.

Ming city walls

Located in downtown Luzhou, along the Tuo River, is a 1,100-meter long city wall. First built during the Song Dynasty, it was restored in the Ming, Qing and Republic of China period (1912-1949). The entire wall was built with rectangular pieces of stone.



Oiled paper umbrellas are becoming collectibles.



The umbrellas are made of moso wood and other natural materials.

Dining



Traditional Cantonese Dim Sum

Come enjoy traditional Cantonese dim sum by Hong Kong Master Chef Cheung Fai Man at Yao Chi Chinese Restaurant. There are more than 60 varieties of dim sum, including braised crab and mushroom and glutinous rice with chicken and lotus leaf.

Try the Weekend Special, a dim sum buffet trolley priced 138 yuan (15 percent gratuity) per person. Reservations are recommended.

Where: Yao Chi Cantonese Restaurant, Grand Millennium Beijing, Fortune Plaza, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Every weekend

Tel: 8587 6888 ext. 3013



Grand Millennium Beijing mooncake delight

The 15th day of the eighth lunar month marks Mid-Autumn Festival, an important time of family reunions. Even if you can't be with the ones you love, at least you can feast on the same mooncakes.

This year Grand Millennium Beijing has prepared a special box of exquisite mooncakes packed in specially designed boxes. They make the perfect gifts for friends and families.

The Grand Millennium Box of eight mooncakes includes cakes with mixed nut, red bean paste, jujube paste, black tea, white lotus paste and egg yolk, chocolate, red lotus paste with egg yolk and low-sugar pumpkin fillings.

The Peony Box of six mooncakes includes cakes with mixed nut, red bean paste, jujube paste, black tea, red lotus paste and egg yolk and chocolate fillings.

Any purchase of more than 100 boxes is eligible for free delivery within Fifth Ring Road.

Where: Yao Chi Cantonese Restaurant, Grand Millennium Beijing, Fortune Plaza, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: Grand Millennium Box, 328 yuan; Peony Box 198 yuan

Tel: 8587 6888 ext. 3013



Celebrating Switzerland with Swissotel

Swissotel Beijing is bringing two gourmet delights to Beijing this August: cheese and chocolate Swiss signature dishes offered at Café Swiss and The Flow Lounge & Bar.

The creative buffet dinner "Swiss Night" on August 1, priced 228 yuan per person, features Raclette, the Swiss signature main dish and Swiss chocolate dessert. Traditional Swiss Cheese Fondue will be offered at a 50 percent discount to all guests (208 yuan per person, minimum 2 persons per serving).

Also in August, a special Swiss chocolate cake is available for 50 yuan at Café Swiss and The Flow Lounge & Bar. The cake makes the perfect take-away gift. The exciting Swiss wine promotion, which includes a Swissotel Mezze Platter, is sure to entertain. Red wines are 500 yuan and whites 400 yuan. All prices are subject to a 15 percent gratuity.

Where: Swissotel Beijing, 2 Chaoyangmen Bei Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: August

Tel: 6553 2288 ext. Café Swiss or the Flow Lounge & Bar

Hotel



Award to Swiss touch team of Swissotel Beijing

The Women Qual@titude Service Station Award was recently issued to the "Swiss Touch" team at Swissotel Beijing by China Women's Federation.

Swissotel Beijing has a fantastic team to accept incoming phone calls, manage guest relations, respond to in-room dining requests, phone its VIP guests and other important functions. As Swissotel Beijing Hong Kong Macau Center begins next 20 years, all team members will have the opportunity to "pamper" guests in a variety of ways.

Regardless of where a team member works, he or she is a guest relations expert capable of meeting and greeting guests and thanking them for their business.

The hotel recently renamed its Service Center to Swiss Touch in keeping with the quality, passion and manner in which its guests wish to be treated.

Shangri-La's golden circle offers 'Double Indulgence' summer promo

Shangri-La's Golden Circle Loyalty Program is offering a special summer promotion to its members with double award points and double qualifying nights on any two consecutive qualifying nights before September 30 at any Shangri-La, Kerry or Traders hotel worldwide.

Golden Circle members can earn double award points at the hotels' participating restaurants or CHI, The Spa as a non-staying guest. In addition, Golden Circle is welcoming new members with 500 extra Golden Circle Award Points (GC Award Points) as a first time bonus after enrolling online and staying two consecutive qualifying nights.

During the promotion period, Golden Circle members who stay 10 or 25 qualifying nights can upgrade to a Jade or Diamond membership and enjoy additional exclusive benefits, including complimentary daily buffet breakfast, early check-in, late check-out and free stay for a partner in the same room.

Park Plaza Beijing Science Park supports Dandelion School's summer camp

Hotel managers and the head chef of Park Plaza Beijing Science Park visited Daxing Dandelion Middle School to support its summer camp by teaching 77 students to make sushi.

The head chef and assistant from Kobe Japanese restaurant instructed the students. Students enjoyed participating in the activity. Most had experience cooking at home, and learning to make sushi and fruit salad gave them new skills with which to surprise their parents.

During the event, the hotel provided soft drinks and fruit cakes to the students, who gave the hotel hand-made greeting cards.

The event is not the hotel's first charitable support of Dandelion. It previously invited the students to celebrate Christmas in 2010. It is planning other activities to support the school.



Dandelion School, a nonprofit educational institute located in Daxing District, is the first and only middle school built for children from low-income migrant families in the capital.

(By Jackie Zhang)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Li Zhixin at lizhixin@ynet.com.

Getting the right 'juice' for your boss



By Huang Daohe

For many young people, working for a multinational company like Google, Apple or JP Morgan is an enviable goal which can provide opportunities to learn from great thinkers from all over the world. The generous salary doesn't hurt either.

But such experiences aren't always pleasurable. For many Chinese, frequent exposure to native English speakers can be a double-edged sword that may help improve their English skills, but also result in embarrassment.

My friend Lillian, who works for a US trading company in Beijing, knows this well. At a recent get-together, the 26-year-

old secretary shared her latest experience.

Late spring is a busy time for trading entrepreneurs in China, as the country's largest trade fair, the Canton Fair (China Import and Export Fair), opens every April. As a result, Lillian's American boss Joe traveled to Guangzhou every other week last spring to attend the fair.

Occasionally, her boss would need to travel to Guangzhou on short notice, causing headaches for Lillian, as most hotels near the exhibition site were booked up.

During one such crisis, Joe asked, "Don't you have any pull, Lillian?"

Upon seeing the look of bewilderment on Lillian's face, Joe tried a different phrase: "Don't you have any juice?"

"But what kind of juice do you want? Apple juice or orange juice?" asked Lillian, thinking that Joe wanted something to drink.

After a moment of silence, the office burst into laughter. Lillian realized she had made another Chinglish mistake.

The words "pull" and "juice," though regularly used, are not as simple as they seem. In slang, they can equate to the word "connection." To have "pull" means to have advantage or influence.

When Joe asked Lillian about the juice, he actually wanted to know whether she had any relationships, or guanxi, in Guangzhou that could help him get a room.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to lizhixin@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Nihil Obstat — Entiende Usted?

By Terry-Boyd Zhang

"You get what you pay for" is a common saying in English.

The other day I saw a sign on a bus for a travel company that promised "Scenery and Beauty for Cheap." I thought to myself, now that sums up modern society's problem in a nutshell, doesn't it? We all want luxurious scenery, green as the virgin Canadian forests in a nature documentary, total natural beauty. Pristine. Untouched by disrespectful tourists who want it for nothing.

We all want perfection, but most of us can't afford it.

So, if you hire a cheap translator, you are likely to get what you pay for.

On the other hand, maybe the translator for this sign was too expensive and fluent in too many languages to know which one to choose. Is it German? Nein, my German friend told me, it's



more like Latin, or Latin-English, so this will have to be a double explanation.

According to Wikipedia, "nihil obstat" is Latin and means "nothing hinders" or "nothing stands in the way" of an initiative or an appointment. An example might be a totalitarian government's decision to ban or censor a particular book or movie. Incidentally, "nihil" is related to the English word "nihilism," a movement which encour-

ages the end of traditional social values and beliefs, along the lines of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Now for the Chinese. The first character in Chinese is *wu*. We have seen it before and it means "no" or "none." "Obstat," of course, is represented by the characters *zhàng'ai*, which means "obstacle" or "hinder." The last two characters are *tongdao* and may mean "channel" but can also mean "route," "passageway" or "thoroughfare," and means "tunnel" when it is a *dixia tongdao*. I do not know why it is plural.

So, the Chinese is fine, the Latin is good, and the English...well, you can't win 'em all. I took this photo outside the excellent Tianchumiaoxiang Vegetarian Restaurant in Wudaokou, which did appear to be wheelchair accessible — at least the ramp was bicycle-free the day I was there.

Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week.

1. The studio has 10 members, each of which is both a dancer and choreographer.

Professor Zhu Shida (ZSD): The problem in this sentence is the usage of the pronoun. It is incorrect to use "which" to denote "members," because the "members" here indicate living persons. Therefore, we should use "who," but because it is the object, "whom" is the proper choice. So, the right way to say it is: The studio has 10 members, each of whom is both a dancer and choreographer. We have a modern English tendency to use "who" instead of "whom" when it is in an objective status. For instance, the studio has 10 members, who many respect and admire. However, in the sample sentence, it is a must to use "whom."

Terry-Boyd Zhang (TBZ): The use of "whom" is a slowly dying art. The Professor is correct, and even native speakers should pay attention to this advice!

2. The first "immortal" human cells grown in culture, they have been alive for more than 60 years.

ZSD: As "they" here indicate "the human cells" there are two subjects, which is repetitive, redundant and grammatically incorrect. We may simply say: The first "immortal" human cells grown in culture have been alive for more than 60 years. However, sometimes repetition is used for emphasis: The first "immortal" human cells grown in culture, a rare and interesting scientific achievement, have been alive for more than 60 years.

TBZ: To me, the sample sentence is an example of translating a sentence from Chinese, rather than writing directly into English. As a beginner learning English, the only recourse you have is to translate what you want to say, word by word, into the second language. It is only later that sentence construction will begin to come more naturally, and you get a 'feel' for what sounds right. There will still be some translation involved, especially in complex sentences such as the one above. However, the goal is to eventually become fluent, so that you can think and write in English.

3. A 38-minutes film

ZSD: This could be: This film lasts 38 minutes. If you want to use it as an attributive, you would say "38-minute" in its singular form, which would be: a 38-minute film ("long" or "old" are being omitted more often from this structure). However, for academic and formal English, it should be: a 38-minute-long film. Currently, people often say: 30-year career, 10-mile distance, instead of 30-year-old career, the 10-mile-long distance. At any rate, you cannot say: 30-years career or 10-miles distance.

TBZ: Ugh. This was one of my last grammar lessons this term. It is a relatively easy rule to remember — you just have to remember it! If there is a hyphen, it must be singular — do not add 's'!

4. The geopark museum

ZSD: This is repetitive. I don't think it's necessary to use "geopark" and "museum" together, because a geopark is an open space set aside for tours of geological interest or study, making it a kind of museum. Similarly, when we say the "volcanic park," would we ever say the volcanic park museum? Probably not.

TBZ: For me, Geopark Museum and even Volcanic Park Museum are OK. Sometimes the names of historical monuments, parks and such are difficult to express from one language to another. The same goes for the meaning (or the importance) of some words or concepts. Geopark Museum isn't the worst I've heard, so this one I would just let go. To be honest, 'geopark' is a new word and concept for me. I look forward to visiting one of China's eight such museums soon!



“How can you escape from where you're born?”

Satellites falling from the sky

By Xinji Letu

A giant black iron object weighing 100 kilograms fell from the sky and onto the paddies of Wu Zaixiang, a peasant in Sanxing Village, Suining County, Hunan Province.

Contrary to the whisperings of superstitious onlookers, the mess of iron wasn't a messenger from the heavens but a piece of debris dropped by the Long March 3B rocket launched at Xichang Satellites Launch Center in Sichuan Province, some 900 kilometers from the remote village.

The rocket was notable for having launched Chinasat 9, the communications satellite that helped broadcast the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games to millions of families living in remote areas.



A villager collects debris.

Suining County is one of possible landing points for debris dropped by rockets launched at Xichang Launch Center. The peasants in its 11 villages are accustomed to seeing falling rocket debris: more than 20 pieces have landed in their village during the past two decades.

But iron falling from the heavens was an idea quite alien to director Zhang Zanbo before he saw a news blurb about the local government recycling rocket debris when he returned to his hometown in Hunan Province for summer vacation in June 2008.

"I didn't realize that rocket parts fell on areas where people lived. I assumed they were dropped in oceans or deserts," Zhang said last Saturday in Beijing.

In July 2008, weeks after the launch of Chinasat 9, he carried his camera and went to Suining County to work on his documentary *Fallen from the Sky*.

"I wanted to know how these people felt about dangerous objects raining on them year after year," Zhang said.

Many farmers in Suining County have their own collections of rocket parts: some big and some small. Some pieces land on barns and crush the farmers' pigs; others land on paddies and ruin the year's crops.

Normally, these incidents are reported to the government: the farmers wait for the satellite launch center to

clean up the metals. Some keep the debris a secret and try to sell it as scrap on their own.

Compensation for rocket damage has been a headache for both sides. Leaders from the army say they do not want the peasants to suffer losses, but say the farmers calculate their losses at exorbitant prices.

In the film, Yuan Zailian's house roof is smashed by falling debris. He meets with a group of villagers and officials from the local military to discuss compensation. In the end, after hours of bargaining, Yuan secures a compensation package for 2,000 – less than the cost of roof repairs.

"If we refuse to take their offer, it goes to the insurance company. God knows how long a settlement will take if they get involved," Yuan said.

Like other remote areas in central and western China, people in Suining County lead a hard life. Agricultural production remains primitive.

Even as cutting-edge aerospace vehicles are flying above their heads, Zhang

said the farmers in the county are still using their bare hands to reap and thresh rice.

Zhang said he wanted his documentary to show this juxtaposition. "Despite the conflict between national will and personal safety, I found the people there were not as passive as I expected even though their lives are miserable," he said.

Perhaps because of traditional concepts and their love of the land, Zhang said they face their fate in a square and detached manner.

Many village members bought televisions to see the broadcast of the Olympic Games. "When the Games were held in Beijing, everyone was happy and excited about it even though they had been victims of the preparations for that moment," Zhang said.

2008 was an eventful year for China: the public rocked between heavy snowstorms, the Olympics, the launch of the manned spacecraft Shenzhou 7 and a dairy scandal. Even remote places like Suining County felt the effects.

"My goal isn't just to tell people there is falling rocket wreckage. I wanted to show the lives of these people," Zhang said.

In the film, a student from a local elementary school writes, "We wish the motherland would stop sending satellites to our town. Many people live here, and our lives would be happier."

"I think it's a good thing that the government is planning to move Xichang Launch Center to Wenchang, Hainan Province. In the future, rocket debris can fall into the ocean," Zhang said.



Villagers carry off the iron that fell from the sky.

Photos provided by Zhou Zhanbo



Rocket parts rain on the villager's homes.

